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THE WORLD'S ILLUSION

BY

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AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION BY
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THE SECOND VOLUME:
RUTH

NEW YORK
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THE WORLD'S ILLUSION

CONVERSATIONS IN THE NIGHT

I

When Wolfgang visited his home during the Christmas vacation he congratulated his father on the latter's accession to a new dignity; Albrecht Wahnschaffe had been made a Privy Councillor.

He found the house changed—silent and dull. From a brief conversation with his father he learned that Christian was causing anxiety and excitement. He listened avidly, but did not succeed in gathering any details. Strangers had told him of Christian's sale of his properties; but he had no notion of the meaning of this step.

He had but one long talk with his mother. She seemed to him to be morbid and to treat him with an indifference that wounded him.

Rumours of all kinds reached him. The major-domo informed him that Herr von Crammon had spent a couple of days at the castle, almost constantly closeted with its mistress. They had sent an enormously long telegram to Berlin, offering some one a bribe of forty or fifty thousand marks. The telegram had not been addressed directly to the person in question, but to an intermediary. The reply must have been unfavourable, for on its receipt Herr von Crammon had announced that he himself would proceed to Berlin.

Wolfgang decided to write to Crammon, but his letter remained unanswered.

Since, at bottom, he took very little interest in Christian's doings, he refrained from any further investigation, and at

the beginning of January returned to Berlin. From the behaviour of his acquaintances it was evident that a secret in which he was concerned weighed on their minds. In many eyes there was an indefinite yet watchful curiosity. But he was not particularly sensitive. His aim was to appear faultless in the worldly sense and not to alienate any who might affect his career. He was so wholly indentified with the views of his social group that he trembled at the very thought of being accused of a mistake or an unconventionality. For this reason his demeanour had an element of the nervously watchful and restless. He was extremely careful to venture the expression of no opinion of his own, but always to be sure that whatever he said represented the opinion of the majority who set the standards of his little world.

At a social gathering he observed near him several young men engaged in eager but whispered conversation. He joined them and they became silent at once. He could not but remark the fact. He drew one of them aside and put the question to him brusquely. It was a certain Sassheimer, the son of an industrial magnate of Mainz. He could have made no better choice, for Sassheimer envied him, and there was an old jealousy between his family and the house of Wahnschaffe.

"We were talking about your brother," he said. "What's the matter with him? The wildest stories are floating around both at home and here in Berlin. Is there anything to them? You ought to know."

Wolfgang grew red. "What could be wrong?" he replied with reserve and embarrassment. "I know of nothing. Christian and I scarcely communicate with each other."

"They say that he's taken up with a loose woman," Sassheimer continued, "a common creature of the streets. You ought to do something about that report. It isn't the sort of thing your family can simply ignore."

"I haven't heard a syllable about it," said Wolfgang, and

became redder than ever. "It's most improbable too. Christian is the most exclusive person in the world. Who is responsible for such rot?"

"It is repeated everywhere," Sassheimer said maliciously; "it's queer that you're the only one who has heard nothing. Besides, he is said to have broken with all his friends. Why don't you go to him? He is in the city. Things like that can ordinarily be adjusted in a friendly way before the scandal spreads too far."

"I shall inquire at once," said Wolfgang, and drew himself very erect. "I'll probe the matter thoroughly, and if I find the report to be a slander I shall hold those who spread it strictly accountable."

"Yes, that would seem the correct thing to do," Sassheimer answered coolly.

Wolfgang went home. All his old hatred of his brother flamed up anew. First Christian had been the radiant one who threw all others in the shade; now he threatened to bring disgrace and danger into one's most intimate circles.

The hatred almost choked him.

II

The hours of consultations and interviews were drawing to an end. The features of Privy Councillor Wahnschaffe showed weariness. The last person who had left him had been a Japanese, a councillor of the ministry of war at Tokio. One of the directors had been present at the conference, which had been important and of far-reaching political implications. He was about to go when Wahnschaffe called him back by a gesture.

"Have you selected an engineer to go to Glasgow?" he asked. He avoided looking at the man's face. What annoyed him in the men around him was a certain expression of greed after power, possession, and success, which they wore like a

mental uniform. He saw almost no other expression any more.

The director mentioned a name.

Herr Wahnschaffe nodded. "It is a curious thing about the English," he said. "They are gradually becoming wholly dependent on us. Not only do they no longer manufacture machines of this type, but we have to send an expert to set them up and explain their workings. Who would have thought that possible ten years ago?"

"They frankly admit their inferiority in this respect," the director answered. "One of the gentlemen from Birmingham, whom we took through the works recently, expressed his utter amazement at out resistless progress. He said it was phenomenal. I gave him the most modest reason I could think of. I explained that we didn't have the English institution of the week-end, and this added five to six hours a week to our productive activity."

"And did that explanation satisfy him?"

"He asked: 'Do you really think that accounts for your getting ahead of us?' I said that the time amounted to several thousand hours a year in the activity of a whole nation. He shook his head and said that we were extremely well-informed and industrious, but that, closely looked upon, our competition was unfair."

The Privy Councillor shrugged his shoulders. "It is always their last word—unfair. I do not know their meaning. In what way are they fairer than ourselves? But they use the word as a last resort."

"They haven't much good-will toward us," said the director.

"No. I regret it; but it is true that they have not." He nodded to the director, who bowed and left the room.

Herr Wahnschaffe leaned back in his chair, glanced wearily at the documents scattered over his huge desk, and covered his eyes with his pale hand. It was his way of resting and of collecting his thoughts. Then he pressed one of the numerous

electric buttons on the edge of the desk. A clerk entered. "Is there any one else?"

The clerk handed him a card, and said: "This gentleman is from Berlin, and says he has an appointment with you, sir."

The card read: "Willibald Girke, Private Detective. The Girke and Graurock Private Detective Agency. Puttbuser Street 2, Berlin, C."

III

"Have you anything new to report?" the Privy Councillor asked.

A swift glance showed him in this face, too, that well-known and contemptible greed for power and possession and success that stopped in its hard determination at no degradation and no horror.

"Your written communications did not satisfy me, so I summoned you in order to have you define more closely the methods to be used in your investigations." The formal phraseology hid Herr Wahnschaffe's inner uncertainty and shame.

Girke sat down. His speech was tinged with the dialect of Berlin. "We have been very active. There is plenty of material. If you'll permit me, I can submit it at once." He took a note-book out of his pocket, and turned the leaves.

His ears were very large and stood off from his head. This fact impressed one as a curious adaptation of an organism to its activity and environment. His speech was hurried; he sputtered his sentences and swallowed portions of them. From time to time he looked at his watch with a nervous and uncertain stare. He gave an impression as of a man whom the life of a great city had made drunken, who neither slept nor ate in peace through lack of time, whose mind was shredded from a ceaseless waiting for telephone calls, letters, telegrams, and newspapers.

He spoke with hurried monotony. "The apartment on

Kronprinzenufer has been kept. But it is not clear whether your son may be regarded as still occupying it. During the past month he passed only four nights there. It seems that he turned the apartment over to the student of medicine, Amadeus Voss. We have been watching this gentleman right along as you directed. The style in which this young man lives is most unusual, in view of his origin and notorious poverty. It is obvious, of course, where he gets the money. He is matriculated at the university; and so is your son."

"Suppose we leave Voss out for the moment," Herr Wahnschaffe interrupted, still burdened by his uncertainty and shame. "You wrote me that my son had rented in succession quite a series of dwellings. I should like an explanation of this, as well as the exact facts of his present whereabouts."

Girke turned the leaves of his note-book again. "Here we are, sir. Our investigations provide an unbroken chain. From Kronprinzenufer he moved with the woman concerning whom we have gathered full and reliable data to Bernauer Street, in the neighbourhood of the Stettiner Railroad Station. Next he moved to 16 Fehrbelliner Street; then to No. 3 Jablonski Street; then to Gaudy Street, quite near the Exerzier Square; finally to Stolpische Street at the corner of Driesener. The curious thing is not only this constant change of habitation, but the gradual decline in the character of the neighbourhoods selected, down to a hopelessly proletarian level. This fact seems to reveal a secret plan and a definite intention."

"And he stopped at Stolpische Street?"

"He's been there five weeks, since the twentieth of February. But he rented two flats in this place, one for the woman in question and one for himself."

"This place is far in the north of the city, isn't it?"

"As far as you can get. West and north of it there are empty lots. To the east the roads lead to the cemeteries of Weissensee. All around are factories. It's an unhealthy, unsafe, and hideous locality. The house itself was built about

six years ago, but is already in a deplorable condition. There are forty-five flats with outside light, and fifty-nine with nothing but light from the court. The latter are inhabited by factory hands, hucksters, people of uncertain occupations, and characters that are clearly suspicious. Karen Engelschall, the woman in question, has an outside flat on the third floor, consisting of two rooms and a kitchen. The furnishings belong to a widow named Spindler. The monthly rent is eighty marks, payable in advance. She has a servant, a young girl named Isolde Schirmacher, who is the daughter of a tailor. Your son lodges on the ground-floor of the inside flats with a certain Gisevius, who is night watchman in the Borsig works. His accommodation consists of a barely furnished living-room and a half-dark sleeping chamber in which there is nothing but a cot."

Herr Wahnschaffe's eyes grew wide, under the influence of a fright which he could not quite control. "For heaven's sake," he said, "what can be the meaning of it?"

"It is a mystery indeed, sir. We have never had a similar case. There is plenty of room for supposition, of course. Then there's the hope that future events may throw light on everything."

Herr Wahnschaffe recovered his self-control, and coldly dismissed the other's attempts at consolation. "And what is your information concerning the woman?" he asked in his most official tone. "What results have you in that direction?"

"I was just about to come to that, sir. We have done our best, and have succeeded in uncovering the woman's antecedents. It was an extremely difficult task, and we had to send a number of agents to different parts of the country. The name and occupation of her father could not be discovered, since her birth was illegitimate. Her mother is a Frisian. She was housekeeper on a small estate near Oldenburg. After that she lived with a pensioned tax-gatherer. After his death

she opened a small shop in Hanover, but the business failed. In 1895 she was convicted of fraud, and spent three months in prison at Cleve. We lost track of her after that, until she turned up in Berlin in 1900. First she lived in Rixdorf. Next she rented rooms—first in Brüsseler Street behind the Virchow Hospital, at present in Zionskirch Square. She has been accused of renting rooms for immoral purposes, but nothing could be proved against her. She pretends to be an art-embroiderer, but as a matter of fact she practises fortune-telling and clairvoyance. To judge by her way of living there is money in the business. She never had but two children, Karen, and a son, now twenty-six, named Niels Heinrich, who is known to the police as a worthless rogue and has come into conflict with the law on several occasions. Karen has had a shady career since her early girlhood. No doubt her mother put her up to everything. When she was seventeen her mother is reported to have sold her to a Dutch ship captain for five hundred gilders. She has given birth to two illegitimate children, at Kiel in 1897 and at Königsberg in 1901. Both died shortly after birth. In addition to the cities named, she has lived in Bremen, Schleswig, Hanover, Kuxhaven, Stettin, Aachen, Rotterdam, Elberfeld, and Hamburg. At nearly all these places she was a registered prostitute. We lost sight of her between 1898 and '99. Her circumstances seemed to have improved temporarily during that year. According to one informant she accompanied a Danish painter to Wassigny in the North of France. From Hamburg, where she gradually sank lower and lower, she was brought to Berlin in the manner concerning which we had the honour of rendering you an account in our report of February 14th."

Girke drew a long breath. His achievement in its architectonic structure somehow impressed him anew. He enjoyed the methodical arrangement of the material gleaned from so many sources, and threw a glance of triumph at the Privy Councillor. He did not observe the latter's stony expression, but continued

on his victorious progress. "On her arrival in Berlin she sought out her mother, and they rapidly became very intimate again The mother came to visit both at Kronprinzenufer and at all the other places. The brother Niels Heinrich also came to see Karen—twice at Fehrbelliner Street, once on Gaudy, and five times on Stolpische. Quarrels arose among these three persons, which grew noisier on every occasion. On the eleventh inst., at five o'clock in the afternoon, Niels Heinrich left his sister's flat in a rage, uttered threats and boasted and created an uproar in a gin-shop. On the twelfth he came from the house in the company of your son. They went together as far as Lothringer Street; there your son gave the fellow money. On the sixteenth he walked up and down before the house on Kronprinzenufer till evening. When your son, accompanied by the student Voss, appeared in the street, he approachd them. After a brief exchange of words your son gave him money again, gold-pieces as well as a bank note. Your son and Voss walked on together as far as the Tiergarten, and during that time Voss seemed to be violently expostulating with your son. The subject of their conversation is unknown. Our agent did not succeed in getting close enough to them, and I had other engagements that day. We are credibly informed, however, by parties in the house on Kronprinzenufer, that Voss is often of an extreme insolence and bitter aggressiveness which are both directed again your son."

Albrecht Wahnschaffe was white to the very lips. To hide the tumult of his soul, he arose and went to the window.

The foundations were trembling. The peak of life on which he stood was being obscured by dark fumes, even as out there the smoke and soot which the wind blew down from the great smoke-stacks covered all things. The chaotic noises of toil and the whir of machines floated dully to him. On roofs and cornices lay soiled snow.

What was to be done? There were provisions in law for extreme cases; but to have Christian declared irresponsible

would not destroy the disgrace. There was nothing to do but persuade, prevent, guard, hush up.

Words finally wrung themselves from his aching throat: "Does he associate with any other questionable people?"

"Not that I know of," Girke answered. "With plain people, yes; both in the house and on the street. But he goes to lectures regularly, and studies at home. He does not associate with his fellow students or, rather, did not until lately. We are told, however, that at the university his personality has aroused attention. Two days ago he received a visit from a Herr von Thüngen, who is stopping in the Hotel de Rome. Whether this event will have any consequences we cannot say yet."

With clouded brow the Privy Councillor said: "I have bought all of my son's possessions. The proceeds of the sale, amounting to thirteen million five hundred thousand marks, have been deposited in the Deutsche Bank. There are unhappily no legal methods by means of which I can be informed concerning the use to which this money is put, and whether not only the income but the capital is being used. Some clear information on this point would be of importance."

The sum named filled Girke with a reverential shudder. He lowered his head, and saliva gathered in his mouth. "In addition to the thirteen millions, your son also receives his annual income, doesn't he?"

Herr Wahnschaffe nodded. "It is paid him by the firm in quarterly installments through a branch of the Bank of Dresden."

"I merely ask, of course, to have a clear view of the situation. Considering such unlimited means, your son's way of life is mysterious, most mysterious. He usually takes his meals at very humble inns and restaurants; he never uses a motor or a cab, and even the tramway quite rarely. He walks long distances both morning and evening."

This bit of information stabbed the Privy Councillor. It

made a deeper impression on him than anything else the detective had told him.

"I shall have due regard to your wishes in every respect, sir," Girke said. "The information you last referred to will not be easy to obtain. But I shall see to it, sir, that you will be satisfied with the services of our firm."

That ended the interview.

IV

From the unconscious brooding of many days there arose in the mind of Albrecht Wahnschaffe the clear memory of an incident which had taken place at Aix-les-Bains when Christian was fourteen years old.

Albrecht Wahnschaffe had made the acquaintance of a Marchesa Barlotti, a witty old lady who had been a famous opera singer in her youth, and who was now of a positively fascinating ugliness. One day she had met Albrecht Wahnschaffe and Christian on the promenade, and had been so enchanted by the boy's beauty that she had cordially asked him, in her fine, free way, to visit her. Christian had turned pale; but his father had promised, and appointed an hour in his stead. But Christian, in whom the ugliness of the Marchesa had aroused an unconquerable aversion, calmly and coldly refused obedience to his father's wish. No persuasion or request or command had influenced the boy. Albrecht Wahnschaffe fell into one of those Berserker rages which made him drunk and dizzy; it didn't happen more than once in ten years, and when the attack had passed he felt like a man who had had a serious illness. In his rage he had approached Christian and struck him with his stick. But no second blow fell. The expression in the boy's face paralyzed his arm. For it was as of ice, yet as of flame: there was in it a loftiness and also a deadly scorn, against which anger broke as glass will break on granite. And that icy and infinitely astonished expres-

sion seemed to say: You hope to chastise me? To force me?

And the father, in his amazement and humiliation and shame, had recognized the fact that here was a human soul that could not and must not be forced, never, under no circumstances, unto no purpose in the world.

It was this incident that came into his mind now, and was the reason why he definitively gave up the intention of using force.

Months ago he had written to Christian, asking him to come home and explain himself, to rescue his parents from the pressure of anxiety and confusion, and especially his mother, who was suffering beyond her strength. To this letter Christian had replied laconically that there would be no purpose in his coming, and that there was no ground for anxiety, that he was very well and in excellent spirits, and that no one need suffer because he followed his own devices.

But what was the sense of his action? Was there any key to this mystery? Was it possible in this age of science and enlightenment to conceive of a mystic metamorphosis of personality?

He had a vision of Christian walking through the long streets, especially at night, going into humble inns and eating poor food. What was the meaning of it? And he could imagine meeting Christian on such an occasion, and could see his son's conventional courtesy, the proud, cool eyes, the firm, white teeth which that conventional smile revealed. And even to imagine such a meeting filled him with fear.

But perhaps that was necessary. Perhaps he would have to go to him. Perhaps all that had happened did not in reality have the deadly seriousness which it seemed to have at a distance. Perhaps there was some simple confusion that could be cleared and disentangled easily enough.

The thought of Christian burrowed deep into his brain, and his fear grew. If he sought release from that thought, it

emerged to torment him the more, in dreams, in sleepless nights, amid the tumult of affairs, in conversation, in every place, at all times, through all the weeks and months.

V

The castle of the Wahnschaffes, built for delight and splendour, lay desolate. The great reception halls and the guest-rooms were empty. Some American friends had announced their arrival; but Frau Wahnschaffe had begged to be excused.

Her husband sent her delicacies and flowers from the hot-houses. She cared for neither. In a lethargy she sat in an armchair or lay in her bed of state. The curtains were drawn even by day. The electric lamps were veiled.

Memories of Christian's childhood were her refuge. She lived them over in imagination: how Christian as a child of five had lain in bed with her. Early in the morning the nurse had brought him in his loud delight, still with the rosy warmth of sleep upon him. She recalled the bird-like voice, the golden locks, the flexible hands, the radiant, deep-blue eyes. He had stretched out his little hands after her ropes of pearls, when she had come in evening dress into the nursery. Once little maidens had placed a wreath of sweet peas on his head and danced about him in innocent homage. He had raced through the park with two dogs, and stopped with an admirable gesture of astonishment before a statue of bronze. Later, when he was a youth, at the carnival in Mainz he had stood amid lovely women in a flowery chariot and raised a silver goblet toward the beholders.

Unforgettable to her were his gestures, his glances, his resilient walk, the dark tones of his voice. Equally unforgettable were the expectation of his coming, the delight of his presence, the admiration that met him from the eyes of men. The world contained him only.

She read the few letters that he had written her. She

guarded them like relics in a little ebony box. They were sober, dry notes, but to her they were magical. There were ten or twelve lines from Paris or San Sebastian, Rome, Viareggio, Corfu, or the Isle of Wight. Once she had drunk all the beauty of earth from these places. Now that he was no longer there, they faded and died to her.

She had loved her womb because it had borne him; she hated it now because she had lost him. But how or why she had lost him—that was a thing unfathomable. She brooded over it by day and night.

No one could guide her. No thought revealed a gleam of light. She stood before a wall and stared at it in despair. She listened, but no voice reached her ear from the other side. All that people told her seemed absurd and false.

In her bedroom hung a portrait of Christian painted in his twentieth year. It had been done three years before by a Swedish painter. It was very like him, and she adored it. One night she took it from the wall and placed it on a table and lifted the shade from a lamp nearby. She crouched in a chair, rested her head upon her hands, and gazed at the picture steadily and with a questioning passion.

She asked the picture, but it gave no answer. She thrilled with a desire to take that head into her hands. But the face on the canvas smiled its equivocal and remote smile. If only she could have wept! But tears were denied her: too hard and unmoved had she passed through life.

When morning came her maid found her still sitting before Christian's picture. The painted face beside the burning lamp still smiled its alien smile.

VI

Johanna Schöntag wrote to Christian: "It is two months now since I parted from you. In those two months misfortune has been very busy with me and mine. My father committed

suicide; that was why I was summoned home so suddenly. Rash speculations complicated his affairs beyond his power; he saw no way to prevent his being reduced to beggary, and determined to leave the scene of his failure thus abruptly. All obligations have been decently satisfied, and his good name has been saved. We are also told, as if it were a consolation, that he lost his head too soon, that things might have turned out better than he feared. But we are in an unenviable situation, and life is not showing us an admirable aspect. Such sudden transformations should be confined to melodrama. I am still badly confused; I hardly know what is happening to me. I envy those who have an aim of some kind and also the vitality to pursue it. I wonder whether you will write to me. Or have you already forgotten me? Have I even the right to ask that? "

She sent this letter to Crammon with the request to forward it. Crammon replied: " My dear Rumpelstilzkin:—I hope that your voice will not die in the desert. Unhappy things have taken place. The man to whom you are writing has denied himself and his own past and all who love him. The Lord has darkened his soul; we are striving for his salvation. May your assistance bear rich fruit."

The words frightened her, and she did not know how to interpret them. She had time to reflect, for weeks passed before she received an answer to her letter; and this answer was worse than none at all. It came not from Christian himself but from Amadeus Voss, and was as follows:

" My dear Fräulein:—While arranging some documents which my friend Christian Wahnschaffe left in the apartment which I have taken off his hands, I found your letter among other things. Since he has failed for some months, with very rare exceptions, to answer any letters, I think I may take it for granted that you have not heard from him. I can hardly dare hope to make up for his negligence. Who am I? What am I to you? You may not even recall me. I, on the contrary, remem-

ber you very exactly, and regret most constantly that I did not succeed in making you more conscious of my devotion and sympathy. But I am diffident by nature, and the fear of being repulsed or having my feelings misunderstood has assumed morbid intensity in my mnid. Do not therefore, pray, regard it as a tactless importunity if I venture to write you in Christian's stead. The thought of your uncertainty and fruitless waiting pained me, and I determined to put an end to it so far as it lies in my power to do.

"I believe I can give you the assurance that Christian Wahnschaffe is not as guilty, so far as you are concerned, as he may seem to be, unless we agree that his guilt toward all who knew and loved him is the same. To speak of his practising neglect or failing in a duty would be unbecoming in me as well as incorrect in fact. He has sloughed off his former skin, and the coin in which he pays to-day is of another mintage. Whether its value is higher or lower than formerly it is not my office to decide. He has, in the proverbial expression, burned his bridges behind him. What he does may arouse the horror of the morally immature; I, too, I confess, find the motivation obscure and difficult. But one must have patience and faith in a benevolent providence; for we all eat the bread of some abyss and it is bitter on each man's lips.

"It is in view of the uncommon circumstances that I beg you to pardon my taking upon myself the part of an *alter ego* of our friend and making his affairs, as it were, my own. I have done it only after mature reflection; and what may at first seem to you sheer forwardness, and an indelicate intrusion into secrets that are not my own, has been prompted purely by a profound regard for your peace of mind. In closing may I express to you my deep and sincere sympathy? You have suffered from terrible visitations. God in His goodness will assuredly brighten your path again."

Johanna read this letter innumerable times, and each time

with a pang of intolerable shame, each time on the verge of tears. It made her feel so exposed and affronted. And then she would burrow again and again into the artifice of those stilted sentences. Frightened and desperate, and yet with a stabbing curiosity, she asked: What could have happened to make Christian, him whom she trusted immeasurably, whom she knew to be the soul of delicacy and reserve—what could have happened to make him callously expose the most intimate things in life to the treachery and hypocrisy of this man?

In her excitement she went to Crammon's house, but he had left Vienna long ago. She asked where he was, but received no certain information. Aglaia named a Berlin hotel, Constantine the château of Count Vitztum in the mountains of Saxony. Johanna wrote letters, tore them up, reflected and brooded, was pursued by shame and doubt, and finally determined to write to Amadeus Voss. She wrote a brief note in her rigid, angular writing, her left hand clenched in rage, her forehead wrinkled, her little teeth gnawing at her lip. With a certain mockery of implication she thanked him for his trouble, contemptuously ignored his indiscretion, controlled her profoundly instinctive aversion, and finally, with an impatient turn of speech, demanded some clear information concerning Christian Wahnschaffe, since she had never been taught the reading of riddles or the solving of mysteries. She admitted that she had no right to make this demand, since her interest in Christian was merely a friend's. But as such it was strong and kind enough to justify her inquiries.

Four days later Voss's answer reached her. Her heart beat as she held the letter. Unopened she hid it in a drawer. Not till evening, when she had locked herself into her room, did she open and read it.

"My dear Fräulein Schöntag:—I am surprised that you are unaware of a rumour which the very sparrows twitter from the house-tops here. Everybody whispers and peers and is astonished, and dares not trust the evidence of his senses.

Hence to spare you unnecessary circumlocutions I shall proceed at once to the point. You may remember that I left Hamburg a week before Christian Wahnschaffe, and rented a comfortable apartment for us both in Berlin. Since we had both determined to study medicine there, I had every reason to suppose that as long as our relations were harmonious we would have a common household. So I waited for him, and he came at last; but he did not come alone. He brought a woman with him. Here words fail me. I use the word woman because my consideration for you forbids me the use of any other. And yet how shall I convey the true state of affairs, if I shrink back from the unchangeable facts? The truth cannot remain hidden. This person's name is Karen Engelschall. He rescued her in a state of hopeless degradation from some harlots' haunt near the harbour. She is a characteristic outcast. Her appearance is coarse and her manners repulsive. She expects to be confined shortly. She was in the power of a ruffian who maltreated her and beat her; whenever she thinks of him she shakes with terror and horror. She is between thirty and thirty-two years old, but she looks older. One look at her face suffices to convince one that she is familiar with every vice and with every crime.

" My dear young lady, pray do not stop here as you would stop listening were I saying these things to you. The words I have written down are brutally frank, and your imagination, unaccustomed to such images, may identify me with the horrors I am forced to evoke. But I shall be patient, if it be so, until your impressions become sufficiently clarified to do me justice. What I have said is only an introduction, and I must proceed.

" He came with his cases and boxes, but he had discharged his valet. Toward me he was of an extreme cordiality, and indeed he seemed far more cheerful than he had been when I left him. Two rooms were set aside for this woman—a bedroom and a sitting-room. There remained three rooms for

him and two for me. But I had not been prepared for this additional companion and hardly knew what to say. He gave me a superficial explanation of her presence, but he withheld his real confidence. How repulsive is this smoothness of the mere worldling, how indistinguishable from downright falseness! To smile and be silent convinces no one, though it may serve to deceive. We who are lowly born do not know such gestures, and disdain to take refuge in polite irresponsibility. The woman appeared at our meals. She sat there like a clod, played with the cloth, asked foolish question, rattled the silver, and used her knife as a shovel. Whenever Wahnschaffe glanced at her, she looked like a thief who had been caught. I was confounded. He seemed to me out of his senses. His entire behaviour toward her was marked by a considerateness so exquisite that I was compelled to believe that her influence over him had been gained in some supernatural way. But what was its nature? I soon ascertained beyond a doubt that she was not his mistress. Nor was such a thing conceivable; it was a thought to be dismissed at once. What then was the source of her power? It was in some devilish magic. Do not think that my mind is wandering. In hours of spiritual insight I have looked deeply into the secrets of creation. The human soul, poor and rich at once, has endless capacities and powers of transformation. The stars gleam over us and we know them not, neither their influence nor their power. The fissures of the earth have been closed, and we know but as through the memory of a dream that there are demons seeking to rule us. I trust that in this matter we shall some day understand each other when we meet. Accept this prophecy in proof of the truth of my assertions.

"I must continue. I no longer felt at home in those handsome rooms. At night I often stood alone in the darkness, and listened for sounds from the rooms of the other two. I conquered my aversion, and sought out the woman when she was alone. She was talkative in a disagreeable way. I did

not conceal my contempt. In his presence she was dull. Superficially she seems to rule him through her own servility. The sight of her complete degradation impressed an eye satiated with the glories of this world. I tried to discover in her some alluring quality, some trace of lost or ruined beauty, some charm, however humble or even perverse. I hoped to discover her secret by seeming to agree with her and appreciate the situation. I watched for some sign of a change in her soul, some symptom of expiation or conversion. I found instead a crude, stained, stubborn, bestial, lumpish, unformed creature.

"I shuddered. All too near was the time when it had taken all my passionate energy to save myself from the slime; too deeply had I suffered among those from whom the Lord averts His countenance; too many midnights lay behind me in which my soul hovered over the abyss; too long had I been ground between the millstones of sin; too accursed was this woman in my eyes, far too accursed for me to see her glide calmly and sinuously to a point of sloth where she could rest from past evil and prepare herself for more. I felt impelled to flee. It was no spectacle for me. My spirit threatened to become poisoned again and also my heart—that writhing thing that made me a burden to myself and to mankind. I told Wahnschaffe that he could have my rooms; but he urged me to stay, saying that he felt uncomfortable in the house and would leave it. Aha, I thought, he is lusting after palaces; this is too humble for him. But to every one's astonishment he sought far humbler quarters, stayed but a week, sought others that were still meaner, and thus changed his abode twice more until he moved with the woman to the reeking and buzzing tenement house in the north end of the city where he is now.

"If I did not know the facts and were told them, I should laugh incredulously. The widow Engelschall, Karen's mother, was furious when she heard of it. I have met her too, and I cannot describe her without physical nausea. Karen's brother, a rogue and an outcast, questioned Wahnschaffe and threatened

him. He is surrounded by the offscourings of the earth. Yet there he studies, sleeps in a dark hole on a shabby sofa of leather—he the spoiled darling, the expectancy and rose of his own class, the epicure and the allurer, the Adonis and Crœsus! Does my voice seem to pierce your ears even from the pallor of this written sheet? Is your inmost mind petrified? Then pray come here and be a witness to this experiment in monasticism, this modern hermitage, this sombre farce. Come, for perhaps we need you as one of the hearts that once glowed for him. Perhaps eyes from the world of his old delights will be the mirrors in which he will see himself, and find and recover himself once more.

"Do I seem to triumph in his downfall? I should not wish to do so; yet there may be a touch of grimness in my soul. For it is I who prepared the way, I whom dreams of sin like a leprosy of the soul condemn to this very day to an accursed disquietude. He throws away what he has. Millions that breed new millions lie in the bank, and he does not regard them. He lives without luxury or diversion or agreeable company, without plays or cars or games or love or flirtation, without being honoured or admired or spoiled. I await the hour in which he will laugh and declare the period of forgetfulness to be over. So long as the millions breed millions, and his father and mother guard their strong-boxes for him in the background, there is no room for serious fear. His clothes and linen, his cravats and jewels and toilet articles are largely still here where I live alone. He drops in at times to bathe and change his garments. His appearance is what it always was; he looks as though he were going to a luncheon with a minister of state or to a rendezvous with a duchess. He is not melancholy or thoughtful or hollow-eyed. He is as arrogant, as dry of soul, as insignificant, as princely as ever. But there is a new lightness in his actions, a new decisiveness in his speech. And he laughs oftener.

"Once he did not laugh, on that day in his castle when I

told him of darkness and of terror, before he went to meet the dancer. He listened, listened day and night, and asked and listened again. But was it compassion that stirred in his soul? By no means. He is not even a Christian; no heavenly spark enlightens his soul; he knows nothing of God, and is of those to whom the passage in Corinthians applies: The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. I had desired to awaken him. I spoke as with tongues of flame out of the nethermost depths. But he was the stronger: he lured me to his Saturnalia and drove me into crime, and I forgot my eternal weal for the sake of the lusts of this earth. He was like a shadow to me; now I am myself like a shadow, and he insults the holy thing he mocks. What knows he of the axe and the ring? I know of both. What knows he of the signs and symbols that become torches in the darkness of the soul? To him all things are concrete and finite;—the nail and the board, the bell and the candle, the stone and the root, the trowel and the hammer are but dead things to him, but not to me. Rome and Galilee rise and battle. Torment proceeds from him; a torment drives me to him. It is as though we were brothers and linked in the flesh and had crept out of the same womb, and yet neither can find or understand the other.

"Why does he live close to that woman? What does he expect of her? He speaks of her in a tone of strange suspense. It is an uncanny, rash, and insatiable curiosity that is in him. Once he lusted after palaces, now he lusts after sties; once he desired counts and artists, cavaliers and cocottes with ropes of pearls, now he seeks drunkards and paupers, pimps and prostitutes. It is a lust that is in him, and neither pilgrimage nor aspiration nor prayer—lust after the nail and stone, the bell and candle, the stone and root, the trowel and hammer, and all things wherein there is power and from which proceed both suffering and knowledge. I

have seen his eyes gleam when I spoke of the death of an outcast, or of a deaf-mute's drowning himself, who was my own brother and died through his fault; and likewise when I spoke of the self-inflicted death of another which I caused in my downtrodden youth. I watched him well amid his jewels and paintings and silver plate, and the flowers and costly books of his houses, when these things began to satiate him, and when he began to listen greedily for the wailing that comes from prison houses, and when a sleep full of fear came over him. And now he plays with the poor and the things of the poor, and wanders by and collects these things and takes delight in them; he reaches out after one and then after another, and desires to know what is in each and what that signifies, and yet remains the man he was. There is no salvation in this, for it is written: Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

"But why does the woman follow him? Why does she refuse the monstrous sums which his family has offered her to leave him? Why does she calmly return with him to her own underworld, when she must be panting after his gold, his jewels, his houses and gardens, his power and his freedom? What holds her? Why does she tarry? What devil's work is being done? It happened recently that I walked home with him during a violent snow-storm. He had given me a letter of his friend Crammon to read. It was a long and foolish whine, such as one would rather expect from an elderly bluestocking than from a man of sense. We argued about the letter, that is to say, he would not take it seriously, while I talked myself into a rage over it.

"Then he told me that a certain Baron von Thüngen, one of his former boon-companions, had visited him on the previous day. You may remember him; he was one of those who danced attendance on Eva Sorel—a reddish-blond, affected dandy. This man, Wahnschaffe told me, had

hunted for him long and had sat talking with him a whole day. He had said that he was dissatisfied with his life and longed for another way of living; that he did not know what to do, but had become a prey to unbearable melancholy; that he had always felt a deep sympathy for Wahnschaffe, but had not ventured to approach him; and that all he asked now was the privilege of sometimes spending an hour in his company. All this Wahnschaffe told me half diffidently, half in surprise. But the matter was not clear to me, and I said that Thüngen was probably merely one of those half-crazy idlers who had lost his appetite, and whose palate lusts for more sharply seasoned food. He did not take my rudeness amiss, and only said that such a judgment was rash.

"When we had reached our goal I went upstairs with him to Karen Engelschall's rooms. I did not wish to leave him. I was angry because he had again gotten the better of me by his icy sobriety. When we had passed through the narrow hallway, we heard Karen's screeching voice from the kitchen as well as the sound of wood chopping. We opened the kitchen door. The pregnant woman was kneeling by the hearth and splitting kindling wood. On a chair near the wall Isolde Schirmacher, the young girl that waits on her, leaned back with a yellowish pale face and closed eyes. An indisposition had overtaken her; it seemed epileptic in character, for her limbs were rigid and her head bent over backwards. She had evidently been at this task before, and Karen had taken her place. The girl's condition seemed to have caused her no concern. She split the wood with her hatchet, and, unconscious of our presence on the threshold, talked bitterly and blasphemously concerning her pregnancy: she didn't want another brat; she had a horror of it; it ought to be throttled at its first breath. Her talk was pure filth—impossible to report. Then Wahnschaffe entered the room, and lifted Isolde Schirmacher from her chair, and carried her, as though she were no burden at all, into the next room, and laid her on the bed. Then he

came back, and said to the woman: 'Let that be, Karen,' and took the hatchet from her hand and heaped up the wood that had been cut. The woman was frightened. She obeyed him, and was silent, as though speech had died within her. This thing I saw with my own eyes, and from this picture you can see the nature of the woman and the relations of Wahnschaffe and herself.

"No peace is left in me. From an invisible wound in the world's body the blood keeps flowing. I cry out for a vessel to receive it, but no one brings me such a vessel. Or are the sickness and the wound within myself? Is there such a thing as the yearning of the shadow for its body? Is it conceivable that the unimaginable has come to pass, and yet that he who yearned and sobbed and struggled and prayed for it to come to pass cannot recognize it now? There is some strange fatality in it all. I have learned now to tell fruit from rottenness, the bitter from the sweet, the fragrant from the stinking, the hurtful from the harmless. And I have also learned how limbs swing from their sockets, how vertebra joins vertebra, how muscle is intertwined with muscle, how ligament grows on ligament, how the veins pulse and how the brain is stratified. I can open the magic clockwork and put my hand into the mechanism that is forever rigid. There are compensations; but always at the sombre gates of existence must I pay my entrance fee to brighter regions. The other day I had a vision: You stood with me beside the corpse of a young person, and asked me to cut out the heart which had survived by a little the death of its body and twitched under my knife.

"That one more thing I wanted to tell you. With it I close."

Johanna sat over that letter all night until morning. A storm of March swept about the house. Her virginal room, with its hangings of white silk and the white enamelled furniture, seemed already bare and rifled to her. For on the morrow she was to leave it forever.

VII

Dead and wounded men lay on the red velvet sofas of the restaurant. They had been carried here hurriedly, and people were trying to help the living. Through the open doors there blew in an icy blast mixed with snow. Random shots were still fired in the streets, soldiers galloped up and down, an infantry squad appeared and disappeared. Guests hovered at the windows. A German waiter said: "They have mounted cannons on the Neva." A gentleman in a fur-coat entered hastily and said: "Kronstadt is in flames."

In one of the halls which were used for exclusive banquets, there was a brilliant company invited by Count Tutchkoff, one of the friends of the Grand Duke Cyril. There were Lord and Lady Elmster, the Earl of Somerset, Count and Countess Finkenrode, gentlemen belonging to the German and Austrian embassies, the Marquis du Caille, and the Princes Tolstoi, Trubetzkoi, Szilaghin, and their ladies.

The Grand Duke and Eva Sorel had come late. The dinner was over, and the general conversation had ceased. The couples whispered. The Duke, sitting between Lady Elmster and the Princess Trubetzkoi, had fallen asleep. However animated the company, this would happen from time to time; every one knew it, and had become accustomed to it.

Though he slept, his pose remained erect and careful. From time to time his lids twitched; the furrow on his forehead deepened so that it seemed black; his colourless beard was like a fern on the bark of a tree. One might have suspected that he feigned sleep in order to listen; but there was a slackness in his features that showed the uncontrolled muscles of sleep, and lent his face the appearance of a lemur. On his excessively long, lean hand, which rested on the cloth, and, like his lids, twitched at times, gleamed a solitaire diamond, the size of a hazelnut.

A restlessness had stolen over the company. When the

rifles outside began to rattle again, the young Countess Finkenrode arose and turned frightened glances toward the door. Szilaghin approached her, and calmed her with a smile. An officer of the guards entered, and whispered a report to Tutchkoff.

Eva and Wiguniewski sat a little aside, in front of a tall mirror that reflected a pallid image of them and of a part of the room.

Wiguniewski said to her: "Unhappily the report is vouched for. No one thought of such a thing."

"I was told he was in Petrograd," Eva answered. "In a German newspaper, moreover, I read a report that he was arrested in Moscow. And where are your proofs? To condemn Ivan Becker on hearsay is almost as terrible as the crime of which he is accused."

Wiguniewski took a letter from his pocket, looked about him carefully, unfolded it, and said: "From Nice he wrote this to a friend of his who is also my friend. I am afraid it puts an end to all doubt." Painfully, and with many hesitations, he translated the Russian words into French. "I am no longer what I was. Your suppositions are not groundless, and the rumours have not lied. Announce and confirm it to all who have set their hopes on me and given me their trust on definite conditions. A terrible time lies behind me. I could not go farther on my old and chosen path. You have been deceived in me, even as a phantom has misled me. In a case like mine it requires greater courage and strength to confess sincerely, and to wound those who had put their faith and trust in me, than to mount the scaffold and give up one's life. Gladly would I have suffered death for the ideas to which all my thoughts and feelings have been devoted hitherto. All of you know that. For I had already sacrificed to them my possessions, my peace, my youth, my liberty. But now when I have come to recognize these ideas as destructive errors, I must not serve them for another hour. I fear neither your

accusations nor your contempt. I follow my inner light and the God that is within. There are three truths that have guided me in that searching of my soul which led to my conversion: It is a sin to resist; it is a sin to persuade others to resistance; it is a sin to shed the blood of man. I know all that threatens me; I know the isolation that will be mine. I am prepared for all persecutions. Do what you must, even as I do what I must."

After a long silence Eva said: "That is he. That is his voice; that is the bell whose chime none can resist. I believe him and I believe in him." She threw a sombre glance at the face of that sleeper beside the radiant board.

Wiguniewski crushed the letter, and thrust forward his chin with a bitter gesture. "His three truths," he replied, "will be as effective against our cause as three army divisions of Cossacks. They will suffice to fill the dungeons on both sides of the Urals, to unman our youth, to bury our hopes. Each one is a whip that will smite unto the earth an hundred thousand awakened spirits. Crime? It is worse; it is the tragedy of all this land. Three truths!" He laughed through his compressed teeth. "Three truths, and a blood-bath will begin that will make those of Bethlehem and St. Bartholomew seem jests. You may look at me. I do not weep; I laugh. Why should I weep? I shall go home, summon the popes, and give them this rag; and let them made amulets of it to distribute among those who wait for salvation. Perhaps that will suffice them."

Eva's face grew hard. An evil fascination still drew her eyes toward that sleeper's face. Upon the edges of her lips hovered a morbid smile; the skin of her cheek glimmered like an opal. "Why should he not follow the command of his soul?" she asked, and for a moment turned her diademed brow toward the prince. "Is it not better that a man should express and embody himself completely than that many hundreds of thousands be helped in the dreary mediocrity of

their rigid lives? He has said it in his own beautiful way: 'I follow the inner light and the God that is within.' How many can do that? How many dare? And now I understand something he once said "—more penetratingly she looked into that sleeper's face—"'one must bow down before that!' So that was in his mind. Strange ploughs are passing over this earth of yours, prince. In its lacerated body there streams a darkness into which one would like to plunge in order to be born again. A primitive breath is there, and chaos; there the elements thunder and the most terrible dream becomes reality, an epic reality of immemorial ages. Of such life I once had no perception, except in some great marble in which a nameless woe had become rigid and eternal. I feel as though I were looking back on this scene from the height of centuries to come or from a star, and as though everything were vision." All this she said in a trembling voice and with an impassioned melancholy.

Wiguniewski, who had been a constant witness of her inner transformations for months past, was not surprised at her speech. His eyes, too, sought the sleeper's face. With a deep breath he said, "Yesterday a student of nineteen, Semyon Markovitch, heard of Ivan Becker's recanting and shot himself in his room. I went there and saw the body. If you had seen that dead boy, Eva, you would speak differently. A little differently, at all events. Did you ever see a lad lie in his coffin with a little black wound in his temple? He was charming and innocent as a girl, and yet he could experience this unspeakable woe and entertain this determined despair at a loss beyond measure."

A shiver passed over Eva's shoulders, and she smiled with a glittering feverishness that made her seem strangely possessed and heartless. The Prince continued in a matter-of-fact tone. "No doubt there's a good deal that is alluring about this letter. Why shouldn't a man like Ivan Becker render his breach of faith less repulsive by some plausible psychological excuses?

I am ready to grant you that he acted neither in conscious hypocrisy nor from any self-seeking motive. But he wouldn't be the genuine Russian that he is—emotional, turbid, fanatical, self-tormenting—if his transformation were not to entail all the fatal consequences of a systematic and deliberate treachery. He thinks that what he calls his awakening will serve mankind. In the meantime, out of blindness and weakness, confusion and mistaken moral fervour, he rushes into the claws of the beast that waits mercilessly in every corner and nook of Europe seeking to destroy and annihilate. And what I am doing now is passing a most charitable judgment. We happen to know that he has opened negotiations with the Holy Synod and is corresponding eagerly with the secret cabinet. Here in Moscow, as well as in Kiev and Odessa, arrests have been made in rapid succession which must be attributed to him. As things are, he alone could have furnished the information without which the authorities would not have ventured on these steps. These are facts that speak for themselves."

Eva pressed her right hand against her bosom, and stared, as though fascinated, into the air where she saw a vision that caused her to feel a rapidly alternating horror and ecstasy. Her lips moved as though to put a question, but she restrained herself.

With large and earnest eyes she looked at Wiguniewski, and whispered: "I suddenly have a longing that burns my heart, but I do not know after what. I should like to climb a mountain far beyond the snowline; or fare on a ship out into uncharted seas; or fly above the earth in an aeroplane. No, it is none of these things. I should like to go into a forest, to a lonely chapel, and cast myself down and pray. Will you go on such a pilgrimage with me? To some far monastery in the steppes?"

Wiguniewski was puzzled. Passion and sadness were in her words, but also a challenge that wounded him. Before he

could formulate an answer, the Marquis du Caille and Prince Szilaghin approached them.

The sleeper opened his eyes and showed their slothful stare.

VIII

The costumer and the wig-maker had arrived in Edgar Lorm's study. He was going to try on his costume for the rôle of Petrucchio. "The Taming of the Shrew" was soon to be given with new scenery and a new cast, and he looked forward to playing the impetuous and serene tamer.

Judith, sitting on a low stool in her over-dainty sitting-room, her arms folded on her knees, heard his resonant voice, although three closed doors separated them. He was quarrelling; tradesmen and assistants always enraged him. He was difficult to satisfy, for what he demanded of himself he also required of others—the tensest exertion and the most conscientious toil.

Judith was bored. She opened a drawer filled with ribands, turned over the contents, tried the effect of different ribands in her hair, and looked at herself in the glass with a frown. That occupation tired her too. She left the drawer open and the many-coloured silks scattered about.

She went through the rooms, knocked at Lorm's door and entered. She was surprised at his appearance. In the lace-trimmed, velvet doublet, the pied hose, the broad-brimmed hat with its adventurous feather, the brown locks of the wig that fell to his shoulders, he looked a victor, handsome, bold, fascinating. And his very way of standing there was art and interpretation; the whole world was his stage.

Like soldiers at attention, the costumer and wig-maker stood before him and smiled admiringly.

Judith smiled too. She had not expected to find him in a new transformation, and she was grateful for the experience.

She came to him, and touched his cheeks with her fingers. His eyes, still lit by the ardour of the poet's creation, asked after her desire. He was accustomed to have her express some wish whenever she condescended to a caress. With her arm she drew his head down a little and whispered: "I want you to make me a present, Edgar."

He laughed, embarrassed and amused. The good-natured observation of the two strangers was painful to him. He drew her arm through his and led her to the library. "What shall I give you, child?" The bold fervour of Petrucchio which, with the donning of the costume, had passed into him, faded from his face.

"Anything you please," Judith answered, "but something remarkable that will delight me and something that you are fond of."

He smacked his lips, looked merry and yielding, glanced about him, took up one object after another, pushed his chin forward and reflected, mimicked a whole scale of emotions from puzzled helplessness to anxious serviceableness, and finally struck his forehead with a roguish and graceful gesture. "I have it," he cried. He opened a little cabinet, and with a bow gave Judith a watch of very old Nürnberger make. Its case was of exquisite old gold filigree work.

"How charming," said Judith, and balanced the watch on the palm of her hand.

Lorm said: "Now amuse yourself admiring it. I must go and send those fellows away." With a swift, resilient tread he left the room.

Judith sat down at the great oak-table, looked at the engraved ornamentation on the watch, pressed a little spring, and, when the oval sides of the case flew open, gazed into the ancient, lifeless works. "I shall take it all apart," she determined. "But not now; to-night. I want to see what's inside." And she looked forward with a glow to the evening hour when she would take the watch apart.

But the present, charming as it was, did not suffice her. When Lorm returned in modern dress, a clean-shaven gentleman and husband, she held out the watch-case from which she had slipped the works, and begged or rather commanded him, who was now the man of common clay: "Fill it with gold pieces, Edgar. That's what I want."

She was all voracity, avidity, desire.

Lorm lowered his head in vicarious shame. In a drawer of his desk he had a little roll of gold-pieces. He filled the watch-case and gave it to her. Then he said, "While you were out driving to-day, your brother Wolfgang called. He stayed about an hour. He seems to have a rather sterile nature. It amused me—the difficulty he had in placing me in some social category whose ways he understood. He's a born bureaucrat."

"What did he want?" Judith asked.

"He wanted to consult you about Christian. He's coming again to do so."

Judith arose. Her face was pale and her eyes glittered. Her knowledge of Christian's changed way of life was derived from a talk she had had with Crammon during his visit to Berlin, from the letters of a former friend, and from messages that had come to her directly from her parents. The first news had awakened a rage in her that gnawed at her soul. Sometimes when she was alone and thought of it she gritted her teeth and stamped her feet. Further details she heard made the very thought of him fill her to the brim with bitterness. If she had not possessed the gift of forcing herself to forgetfulness, of commanding it so successfully as to annihilate the things she desired not to be, her inner conflicts over this matter would have made her ill and morose. Every enforced recollection awakened that rage in her, and recoiled against him who caused it.

Lorm knew and feared this fact. His instinct told him, moreover, that what Judith feared in Christian's actions was an

evil caricature of her own fate; for she did not conceal the fact from him that she considered herself as one who had voluntarily fallen from her original station. But he thought too modestly of himself to resent this attitude of hers. To tremble at the opinions of people had become a part of her innermost nature. Although she was no longer upheld by the elements that had once nourished her aristocratic consciousness, her being was still rooted in them, and she felt herself degraded in her new life.

But even this could not explain the wild fury to which she yielded at any mention of Christian's name.

Her attitude was that of a cat at bay. "I don't want him to come back," she hissed. "I don't want to hear anything about that man. I've told you that a hundred times. But you're always so flabby, and go in for everything. Couldn't you have told him that I won't listen? Get a car and drive to him at once. Forbid him absolutely to enter my house or to write me. But no! You're such a coward. I'll write to him myself. I'll tell him that his visits will always be a pleasure to me, although his sudden fondness is queer enough, but that I will not, under any circumstances, listen to a word about that man."

Lorm did not dare to contradict her. With gentle superiority he said: "I don't understand your extreme bitterness. No one considers your brother Christian to have done anything criminal. He is very eccentric, at the worst. He harms no one. What injury has he done you? Weren't you and he very fond of each other? You used always to speak of him with an affectionate and proud emphasis. I don't understand."

She became livid and drunk with rage. "Of course," she jeered, "you! Does anything touch you? Have you any sense left for anything but grease-paint and old rags? Have you any conception of what those words stood for—Christian Wahnschaffe? What they meant? You in your world of lies and hollowness—what should you understand?"

Lorm came a step nearer to her. He looked at her compassionately. She drew back with a gesture of aversion.

She was beating, beating the fish.

IX

Karen Engelschall said: "You don't have to worry; there's no chance of his getting back before night. If he does, I'll tell him you're an acquaintance of mine."

She gave Girke a slow and watchful look. She sat by the window, resting her body with the broad satisfaction of those women of the people to whom sitting still is an achievement and a luxury. She was sewing a baby's shift.

"Anyhow we don't have much to talk about," she continued with a malicious enjoyment. "You've said your say. They offer me sixty thousand if I go and disappear. That's all right enough. But if I wait they'll go a good bit higher. I'm somebody now. I'll think it over; you can come back next week."

"You should think very seriously," Girke replied in his official manner. "Think of your future. This may be the highest offer. Six months ago you didn't dream of such a thing. It's very pleasant to live on one's own income; it's every one's ideal. It is very foolish of you to lose such an opportunity."

With her malicious smile she bent lower over her work. An undefined well-being made her press her knees together and close her eyes. Then she looked up, swept her tousled, yellow hair from her forehead, and said: "I'd have to be a bigger fool than I am to be taken in. D'you think I don't know how rich he is? If he wanted to buy me off he'd make your offer look like dirt. Why shouldn't I make a good bargain? No, I'm no fool. This here, as you say, is my great chance, but not the way you think. I'm going to wait and see. If I'm wrong, well, I done it to myself."

Girke shifted his position uncomfortably. He looked at his watch, and then with his prying eyes regarded the room with its common wall-paper, furniture, and carpet.

"I can tell you one thing that'll please you, and I don't mind because it don't change nothing," Karen Engelschall said. "His people are all wrong if they think it's on my account that he's acting the way he does, and that he'd have stayed with them except for me. 'Course, I could make fools of you all and pretend he'd changed his life on my account. What good would that do? A new-born child could see that there's something queer and crazy about it. So why should I go and play-act in front of you, when I myself just sit here and wonder and wonder!"

"That's very true," said Girke, amazed at her frankness. "I understand, and what you say interests me immensely. I have always said that we could count on the most valuable assistance from you. Now you would do me a very real service if you would answer a few questions. I should not, of course, forget your assistance but show my appreciation very practically."

Karen giggled quietly. "I believe you," she answered. "You'd like to spy around a bit and then go and report. No, I'm not fond of that sort o' thing. There're other places where you can hear a lot. There're people what can tell you all you want to know. There's that friend of his, that Voss: Go to him!" The name brought rage to her eyes. "He acts as if there wasn't nothing he didn't know in the world, and treats a person so mean and low that you'd like to punch his dirty nose for him. Ask him who gets the money. I don't, but Voss ought to be able to tell you."

"I'm afraid you overestimate that," said Girke, with his most expert air. "There is no doubt that the man in question is at the bottom of all the trouble. But things being as they are, even ten times the amount that satisfies his greed would be inconsiderable. I can give you that very definite

assurance. There must be other and quite unaccounted drains on his purse."

"I don't understand a word of what you're saying there," Karen answered, and showed her small, yellow, evil teeth. "Maybe you'd like to search my wardrobe or my mattress here, eh? Maybe you think this place is too fine or that I got expensive clothes and jewels? And did you ever see that hole over at Gisevius's where the elegant gentleman himself sleeps? We're living in luxury, we are! Why, the very mice starve here. I found one dead in a corner over there the other day. Most people hate mice, but they don't bother him. And it's pitiful for a man that's lived like he has. According to what people say, he must have been just like the emperor. He had castles and game-preserves and motor cars and the handsomest women, and they just threw themselves at his head. And never no trouble and no worry, more of everything than he could use, and money and clothes and eating and drinking and friends and servants and everything. And now he's at Gisevius's, where the mice die of hunger."

Her burning eyes were fixed on Girke, but in reality she saw him no longer. She was no longer speaking to this unknown man, whose professional curiosity left her quite unmoved. She was relieving herself by breaking the convulsive silence of her lonely days. Her hands lay on her lap like empty shells, and the child's garment had slipped to the floor. Her tongue was unleashed. The words poured forth—words born of her brooding, words familiar to her through many days and nights of strangeness and amazement. In her voice there was something metallic, and in her face the slack muscles grew taut.

Girke listened tensely and took mental notes. He noticed that he need ask no questions now. The machine, fed by a secret fire, had started itself.

Karen went on: "He comes here and sits down and looks around. He sits down and opens a book and studies. Then

he puts the book away and looks around again. Then he notices me sudden like, as if I'd just been blown in. If only he don't begin asking questions again, I says to myself. Then I say to him: 'There was a big noise in the street to-day,' Or I say: 'Isolde's hands are swollen; we got to have some ointment. My mother was here,' I says maybe, 'and told me of a place on Alexander Square where you can buy linen cheap.' He just nods. Then I put on the water for the coffee, and he tells me how a mangy dog followed him for a long time and how he fed it, and that he'd been to a working-men's meeting in Moabit and had talked to some people. But he don't tell me much, and acts kind of ashamed. I'm satisfied so long as he don't ask questions. But his eyes get that expression in 'em, and then he asks if my time wasn't coming soon,"—brutally she pointed to her distended body—" and if I wasn't glad, and how it was the other times, and if I was glad then, and if I'd like to have this or that. And he brings me apples and cake and chocolate and a shawl and a fur-piece for my neck. 'Look, Karen,' he says, 'what I've brought you,' and he kisses my hand. Kisses my hand, I tell you, 'sif I was God knows what, and he didn't know about me. Did you ever hear of anybody kissing the hand of a woman like me? "

She was pale as she asked the question; her features were distorted, and the helmet of her yellow hair seemed to rise. Girke's eyes became blank and stony. " Very remarkable," he murmured; " most interesting."

Karen paid no attention to him. " ' How are you, Karen? ' " she mocked Christian's voice. " ' Do you want for anything? ' What should I be wanting? So I get desperate and I says: 'A runner for the floor or cretonne curtains for the bedroom. Red cretonne,' I says, 'because it pops into my mind. Sometimes we go out together to Humboldthain or the Oranienburger Gate. He thinks to himself and smiles and says nothing. The people stare and I get a goose-flesh. I'd like to scream out at

'em: 'Yes, there he is, the great man, that's him walking with me. And this is me—a woman of the streets that's going to have a baby. A fine couple, eh? Mighty fine! We're a grand couple, we are!' Sometimes that Voss comes and they talk in the other room; or anyhow Voss talks. He knows how to, too; better'n any preacher. And once there was a baron here, a young blond fellow. That was a funny business. He took to crying, and cried and cried like a child. Christian said nothing, but just sat down by him. You never know what he's thinking. Sometimes he walks up and down the room, and other times he'll stand and look out of the window. I don't know where he goes, and I don't know where he comes from. Mother says I'm a fool. She says she's going to find out what's what. If she smells money she sticks like a burr. Only I wish she hadn't sicked Niels Heinrich on to me. He gets more shameless all the time. I get scared when I hear him on the stairs. He begins to cut up rough in the hall. Last Monday he was here and wanted money. 'I got none,' I says, 'you go to work.' He's learned bricklaying and can earn good money, but doing nothing suits him better. He told me to shut my trap or he'd lay me out. Just then Christian came in. Niels Heinrich glares at him. My legs was shaking, and I draws Christian aside and says: 'He wants brass.' Christian didn't know what I meant. So I says: 'Money.' And he gave him money, gave him a cool hundred, and turned and went out. Niels Heinrich followed him; I thought there'd be a fight. Nothing happened; but it was a nasty business. I can't get the scare out of my bones."

She stopped and panted for breath.

Girke thought it his duty to interpolate: "We have accumulated sufficient evidence to prove that Niels Heinrich pursues him with demands for money."

Karen scarcely listened. Her face grew darker and darker. She put her hands against her breast, arose clumsily, and looked around in the room. Her feet were turned inward and

her abdomen protruded. "He comes and he goes, he comes and he goes," she complained, in a voice that gradually became almost a scream. "That's the way it is, day out and day in. If only he wouldn't ask questions. It makes me feel hot and cold. It's like being searched by a matron. D'you know how that is? Everything's turned inside out and everything's handled. Awful! And I ought to try to be comfortable here; there's nothing better in the world. When you've been kicked around like some stinking animal, you ought to thank God to have a chance to breathe easy. But to sit and wait and tell how things was at this place and at that, and how this thing happened and the other—no, I can't stand it no more! It's too much! It's like splitting a person's head open!" She struck her fist against her temple. She seemed an animal, an animal with all the ugliness of a human soul dead or distorted, a wicked savage awakened now and untamable.

Girke was confounded. He got up, and pushed the chair, both as a protection and a weapon, between the woman and himself. He said: "I won't take up more of your time. I beg you to consider my proposition carefully. I shall drop in again some time." He went with a sensation as of danger at his back.

Karen hardly observed that she was alone in the room. She brooded. Her thinking processes were primitive. Two uncertainties tormented her to the point of morbidness and rage: What impelled Christian to search her soul and past, again and again, with the same patience, kindliness, and curiosity? And what inexplicable force made her answer, explain, relate, and give an accounting of her life?

Every time he began she struggled, but she always yielded to that force. She always began by turning her face in horror from her own past. But soon she was forced by an implacable power to embrace that vision, and everything that she had experienced, everything that had vanished, all that was desolate, turbid, dark, and dangerous reappeared with an incom-

parable vividness. It was her own life, and yet seemed another's, who was herself and yet some one else. It seemed to her that all those desolate, turbid, dark, dangerous things began over again, doubly terrible, with a foreknowledge of each day's disconsolate end.

Forgotten things and places plagued her and emerged terribly from her consciousness: rooms and beds and walls, cities and streets and street-corners and public houses and dark halls that led to police courts; human beings and words, and certain hours and days and tears and cries; and all terrors and degradations and crimes, all mockery and wild laughter—all this came back to her, and the past arose and lacerated her mind.

It was like being in an inconceivably long shaft through which one had already passed. And now one was commanded to retrace one's steps and fetch something that one had forgotten. One resisted desperately and struggled against the command, but in vain. One had to turn back to search for that forgotten thing without knowing what it was. And as one wandered along, a figure met one from the opposite direction, and that other figure was one's very self. One was inclined to believe in a mirror and its image. But that other self was lacerated; its breast was torn open, and within it one saw the crimson gleaming of a naked heart.

What was it? What did it all mean?

She fell back on the chair with a deep moan, and covered her face with her hands. Oh, he should be made to pay dearly for it—that tormentor of hers.

The darkness crept in and blotted out her form.

X

Amadeus Voss said to Christian: "I'll tell you exactly how you feel. You are like a man who wants to harden himself to bear cold, and suddenly strips off his garments; or like one who

has never drunk whiskey nor even smelt it, and suddenly pours down a bottle of the vilest sort. But you are freezing in the cold, and reeling from the liquor. And that is not the worst. The worst is that you feel a secret horror. And how could it be otherwise? The elements of which you are made are in bitter conflict with your will. You are full of horror and will not confess it to yourself. Your hands are touching a hundred things, dirty and common and ugly, that once did not so much as enter the circle of your life. Now you sit and look at your nails that are still well manicured. You look at them with disgust, and you cannot bring yourself to touch the glass that greasy lips have touched and calloused hands have held. Yes, you are sorriest of all for your hands. And of what avail is the whole experiment so long as you feel sorry for your hands? Do you think you really lie on that bed and rest on that sofa?"

"I believe I do, Amadeus."

"You are wrong. When the nights are cold, is it really you who stir the fire in that stove?"

"Who else? I've even learned how to do it."

"And is it you who light the kerosene lamp, you whose light pressure made the lustres in palaces to radiate? No, it is not your real self. Think of that smoky ceiling. How restless you must be, and how shaken by aversion! Can you really sleep there? And is not your awakening ghastly? You go about among the poor, but your clothes are handsome; any one can see that a good tailor made them, and that they were pressed recently. It makes those people grin and feel cheated, for in their eyes the greatest cheat is a rich man who apes the poor. They will not take you seriously, though you were to throw your whole fortune into the river or were to wander among them in rags. You only embitter them, and they take your mood for a deception and a morbid whim. You don't know them. You do not know the utter raggedness of their souls; you do not know what they have lacked and have

been forced to lack for generations, nor how they hate you for the bitterness of that necessity. You do not know their interests, nor their thought, nor their speech. And they will never, never comprehend that a man can renounce that which is the very blood of all their hopes and wishes, the essence of their dreams, their envy and their rancour. They toil for ten, twenty, thirty years, to have breath and food in their belly. And you expect them to believe that all you ask is a little breath and food—you, to whom they were hitherto but nameless beasts of burden, you for whom they sent their sons into mines and their daughters into the streets and hospitals, for whom their lungs were corroded by the fumes of mercury and the shavings of steel, for whom hundreds of thousands were sacrificed in the dumb heat of those daily battles which the proletarian fights with capital, sacrificed as stokers and masons, weavers and smiths, glass-blowers and machine-hands, all wage-slaves of your own? What do you hope to accomplish? With what powers of the spirit are you reckoning? What space of time do you give yourself? You are but a gamester, nothing but a gamester; and so far you are but playing with counters, without knowing whether you will ever be able to redeem them."

"All that you say is true," Christian replied.

"Well, then?"

"I cannot do otherwise than I am doing."

"Not a week ago such a horror of that place seized you that you fled to the Hotel Westminster to spend the night there."

"It is true, Amadeus. How do you know it?"

"Never mind that. Do you want to smother your very soul in horror? See to it that you leave a way of escape for yourself. These Engelschalls, mother and son, will make your life a veritable hell. If you fall into their snares, you'll be worse off than some poor devil in the hands of usurers. Surely you're not deceived in regard to the character of that

crowd? A child would know what they are after. I warn you. They and others like them—the longer you live with them, the nearer will they bring you to despair."

"I am not afraid, Amadeus," Christian said. "One thing I don't understand," he added gently, "and it is that you of all people would deter me from doing what I feel to be right and necessary."

Voss answered with intense passion. "You threw me a plank so that I might save myself and reach the shore. Will you thrust me back into the abyss before I feel the firm earth beneath my feet? Be what you really are! Don't turn into a shadow before my very eyes! If you withdraw the plank, I cannot tell what will become of either of us."

His face was horribly distorted, and his clenched hands shook.

XI

In his increasing oppression and confusion of mind, surrounded by hostility, mockery, and unbelief, the face of Ivan Becker appeared to Christian like a beautiful vision. Suddenly he knew that in some sense he had been waiting for Becker and counting on him.

He was heavily burdened, and it seemed to him that Becker was the one human being who could ease that burden. At times he was near despair. But whenever he thought of the words and the voice of Becker and those hours of the beginning of his present path—hours between darkness and dawn—his faith would return.

To him Becker's word was the word of man, and Becker's eye the eye of the race; and the man himself one upon whom one could cast all one's own burdens and fetters and obstacles.

That vision grew clearer and clearer. Becker became a figure with an abyss in his breast, an inverted heaven, in which the tormenting and the heavy things of the world could be cast, and in which they became invisible.

He sent a telegram to Prince Wiguniewski requesting Becker's present address. The reply informed him that, in all likelihood, Becker was in Geneva.

Christian made all preparations to go to Switzerland.

XII

Karen gave birth to a boy.

At six o'clock in the morning she called Isolde Schirmacher and bade her go for the midwife. When she was alone she screamed so piercingly that a young girl from a neighbouring flat hastened in to ask what ailed her. This girl was the daughter of a Jewish salesman who went about the city taking orders for a thread mill. Her name was Ruth Hofmann. She was about sixteen. She had dark grey eyes and ash-blond hair that fell loose to her shoulders, where it was evenly clipped and made little attempts to curl.

Isolde in her haste had left the hall-door open, and Ruth Hofmann had been able to enter. Her pale face grew a shade paler when she caught sight of the screaming and writhing woman. She had never yet seen a woman in labour. Yet she grasped Karen's hands and held them firmly in her own, and spoke to the suffering woman in a sweet and soothing voice until the midwife came.

When Christian arrived, a cradle stood by Karen's bed, and on its pillows lay an unspeakably ugly little creature. Karen nursed the child herself; but no maternal happiness was to be seen in her. A sombre contempt lay in the very way in which she handled the infant. If it cried, she gave it to Isolde Schirmacher. The odour of diapers filled the room.

On the second day Karen was up and about again. When Christian came that evening, he found the widow Engelschall and Ruth Hofmann. The widow Engelschall said that she would take the child into her care. Karen cast an uncertain glance at Christian. The woman said in a loud tone:

"Five thousand marks for the care of it, and everything's settled. What you need is rest, and then you'll have it."

"Far's I'm concerned you can do what you please," said Karen peevishly.

"What do you think, Herr Wahnschaffe?" The widow Engelschall turned to Christian.

He replied: "It seems to me that a child should stay with its mother."

Karen gave a dry laugh, in which her mother joined. Ruth Hofmann arose. Christian asked her courteously whether she had any request to make. She shook her head so that her hair moved a little. Suddenly she gave him her hand, and it seemed to Christian as though he had long known her.

He had already told Karen that he was leaving the city for a time; but he postponed his departure a whole week.

XIII

The house was slowly turning in for the night. Heavy trucks rattled on the street. Boys whistled piercingly. The outer door was closed thunderously. The walls shook with the tread of a hundred feet. In the yard some one was driving nails into a box. Somewhere a discordant voice was singing. Tumult arose from the public houses at the corners. A bestial laugh sounded from above.

Christian opened the window. It was warm. Groups of workingmen came from Malmöer Street and scattered. At one corner there was a green-grocer's shop. In front of it stood an old woman with a lidless basket, in which there were dirty vegetables and a dead chicken with a bloody neck. Christian could see these things, because the light of the street lamp fell on them.

"She'll take the child for four thousand," said Karen.

Surreptitiously Christian glanced at the cradle. The infant

both repelled and attracted him. "You had better keep it," he said.

Hollow tones could be heard from the adjoining flat. Hofmann had come home. He was talking, and a clear boyish treble answered him.

The clock ticked. Gradually the confused noises of the house blended into a hum.

Karen sat down at the table and strung glass beads. Her hair had recently become even yellower and more touselled; but her features had a firmer modelling. Her face, no longer swollen and puffed from drinking, was slimmer and showed purer tints.

She looked at Christian, and, for a moment, she had an almost mad feeling; she yearned to know some yearning. It was like the glowing of a last spark in an extinguished charcoal stove.

The spark crimsoned and died.

"You were going to tell me about Hilde Karstens and your foster-father, Karen," Christian said persuasively. "You made a promise."

"For God's sake, leave me alone! It's so long ago I can't remember about it!" She almost whined the words. She held her head between her hands and rested her elbows on her knees. Her sitting posture always had a boastful lasciviousness. Thus women sit in low public houses.

Minutes passed. Christian sat down at the table facing her. "I want to give the brat away," she said defiantly. "I can't stand looking at it. Come across with the four thousand—do! I can't, I just can't bear looking at it!"

"But strangers will let the child sicken and perhaps die," said Christian.

A grin, half coarse and half sombre, flitted across her face. Then she grew pale. Again she saw that mirrored image of herself: it came from afar, from the very end of the shaft. She shivered, and Christian thought she was cold. He went

for a shawl and covered her shoulders. His gestures, as he did so, had something exquisitely chivalrous about them. Karen asked for a cigarette. She smoked as one accustomed to it, and the way she held the cigarette and let the smoke roll out of her mouth or curl out from between pointed lips was also subtly lascivious.

Again some minutes passed. She was evidently struggling against the confession. Her nervous fingers crushed one of the glass beads.

Then suddenly she spoke: "There's many that isn't born at all. Maybe we'd love them. Maybe only the bad ones are born because we're too low to deserve the good ones. When I was a little girl I saw a boy carry seven kittens in a sack to the pool to drown 'em. I was right there when he spilled them into the water. They struggled like anything and came up again and tried to get to land. But as soon as one of the little heads came up, the boy whacked at it with a stick. Six of 'em drowned, and only the ugliest of 'em managed to get into a bush and get away. The others that was drowned—they was pretty and dainty."

"You're bleeding," said Christian. The broken bead had cut her hand. Christian wiped the blood with his handkerchief. She let him do it quietly, while her gaze was fixed on old visions that approached and receded. The tension was such that Christian dared scarcely breathe. Upon his lips hovered that strange, equivocal smile that always deceived men concerning his sympathies.

He said softly: "You have something definite in mind now, Karen."

"Yes, I have," she said, and she turned terribly pale. "You wanted to know how it was with Hilde Karstens and with the cabinet-maker. He was the man with whom my mother was living at that time. Hilde was fifteen and I was thirteen. She and I was good friends, together all the time, even on the dunes one night when the spring-tide came. The men were

wild after her. Lord, she was pretty and sweet. But she laughed at 'em. She said: 'When I'm eighteen I'm going to marry a man—a real man that can do things; till then, just don't bother me.' I didn't go to the dance at the 'Jug of Hösing'; I had to stay home and help mother pickle fish. That's when it all happened. I could never find out how Hilde Karstens got to the mounds on the heath alone. Maybe she went willingly with the pilot's mate. It was a pilot's mate; that's all we ever knew about him. He was at the 'Jug' for the first time that night, and, of course, he wasn't never seen again. It was by the mounds that he must have attacked her and done her the mischief, 'cause otherwise she wouldn't have walked out into the sea. I knew Hilde Karstens; she was desperate. That evening the waves washed her body ashore. I was there. I threw myself down and grasped her wet, dead hair. They separated me from her, but I threw myself down again. It took three men to get me back home. Mother locked me up and told me to sift lentils, but I jumped out of the window and ran to Hilde's house. They said she'd been buried. I ran to the church yard and looked for her grave. The grave-digger showed it to me far off in a corner. They looked for me all night and found me by the grave and dragged me home. Half the village turned out to see. Because I'd run away from the lentils my mother beat me with a spade handle so that my skin peeled from my flesh. And while I lay there and couldn't stir, she went to the schoolmaster, and they wrote a letter to the squire asking if he wouldn't take me to work on the estate. The house was empty, and the cabinet-maker came into the kitchen where I was lying. He was drunk as a lord. He saw me stretched out there by the hearth, and stared and stared. Then he picked me up and carried me into the bedroom."

She stopped and looked about as though she were in a strange place and as though Christian were a menacing stranger.

"He tore off my clothes, my skirts and my bodice and my shirt and everything, and his hands shook. In his eyes there was a sparkling like burning alcohol. And when I lay naked before him he stroked me with his trembling hands over and over again. I felt as if I'd have to scratch the brain out of his skull; but I couldn't do nothing. I just felt paralyzed, and my head as heavy as iron. If I get to be as old as a tree, I'll never forget that man's face over me that time. A person can't forget things like that—never in this world. And as soon as ever I could stir again, he reeled in a corner and fell down flat, and it was all dark in the room." She gave a deep sigh. "That was the way of it. That's how it started."

Christian did not turn his eyes from her for the shadow of a moment.

"After that," she went on, "people began to say, 'Lass, your eyes are too bold.' Well, they was. I couldn't tell everybody why. The vicar drivelled about some secret shame and turning my soul to God. He made me laugh. When I went into service on the estate, they grudged me the food I ate. I had to wait on the children, fetch water, polish boots, clean rooms, run errands for the Madame. There was an overseer that was after me—a fellow with rheumy eyes and a hare-lip. Once at night when I got to my little room, there he was and grabbed me. I took a stone jug and broke it across his head. He roared like a steer, and everybody came hurrying in—the servants and the master and the mistress. They all screamed and howled, and the overseer tells them a whacking lie about me, and the master says: 'Out with you, you baggage!' Well, why not, I thought. And that very night I tied up my few rags, and off I was. But next night I slunk back, 'cause I'd found no shelter anywhere. I crept all around the house, not because I was tired or hungry, but to pay them out for what they'd done to me. I wanted to set the house on fire and burn it down and have my revenge. But I didn't dare, and I wandered about the countryside for three days, and

always at night came back to the house. I just couldn't sleep and I'd keep seeing the fire that I ought to have lit, and the house and stables flaring up and the cattle burning and the hay flying and the beams smoking and the singed dogs tugging at their chains. And I could almost hear them whine—the dogs and the children who'd tormented me so, and the mistress who'd stood under the Christmas tree in a silk dress and given presents to everybody except to me. Oh, yes, I did get three apples and a handful o' nuts, and then she told me to hurry and wash the stockings for Anne-Marie. But at last my strength gave out, wandering about that way and looking for a chance. The rural policeman picked me up and wanted to question me. But I fainted, and he couldn't find out nothing. If only I'd set fire to that house, everything would have been different, and I wouldn't have had to go with the captain when my mother got me in her claws again. I let him talk me into going for a blue velvet dress and a pair of cheap patent leather shoes. And I never heard till later about the bargain that mother'd struck with him."

With her whole weight she shoved the chair she sat on farther from the table, and bent over and rested her forehead on the table's edge. "O gee," she said, absorbed by the horror of her fate, "O gee, if I'd set fire to that house, I wouldn't have had to let everybody wipe their boots on me. If only I'd done it! It would have been a good thing! "

Silently Christian looked down upon her. He covered his eyes with his hand, and the pallor of his face and hand was one.

XIV

On the train between Basel and Geneva Christian learned from some fellow travellers that an attempt to assassinate Ivan Michailovitch Becker had been made in Lausanne. A student named Sonya Granoffska had fired at him.

Christian knew nothing of the events that explained the

deed. He neither read newspapers nor took any interest in public events. He now asked some questions, and was told what all the world was talking about.

The *Matin* of Paris had printed a series of articles that had caused intense excitement all over Europe, and had been widely reprinted and commented on. They were signed by a certain Jegor Ulitch, and consisted of revelations concerning the Russian revolution, its foreign committee, and the activities of the terrorists. They dragged evidence with so wide a net that they materially strengthened the case of the Russian state against the workingmen's delegate Trotzky, who was then being tried at Petrograd, and thus contributed to his condemnation.

Jegor Ulitch remained in the background. The initiated asserted that there was no such person, and that the name was the mask assumed by a traitor to the revolution. The *Gaulois* and the Geneva *Journal* published vitriolic attacks on the unknown writer. Ulitch did not hesitate to reply. To justify himself he published letters and secret documents that vitally incriminated several leaders of the revolutionary party.

With increasing definiteness the authorship of the *Matin* articles was being assigned to Becker. The newspapers openly voiced this suspicion, and had daily reports of his supposed activities. During a strike of the dock-hands of Marseilles, he was said to have appeared at a strikers' meeting in the garb of a Russian pope; a report had it that he had addressed a humble letter to the Czarina, another that he had become an outcast fleeing from land to land, a third that he had succeeded in mediating between the Russian police and his exiled countrymen, and that hence the Western Powers, who were slavishly supine before Czarism, had somewhat relaxed their cruel vigilance.

Yet Becker's very face remained a mystery and a source of confusion, and the knowledge of his mere existence spread a wide restlessness.

And Christian sought him. He sought him in Geneva, Lausanne, Nice, Marseilles. Finally he followed a hint that led him to Zürich. There he happened to meet the Russian Councillor of State Koch, who introduced him to several of his compatriots. These finally gave him Becker's address.

XV

"I've never lost sight of you," said Becker. "Alexander Wiguniewski wrote me about you, and told me that you had altered the conditions of your life. But his hints were equivocal; so I commissioned friends in Berlin to inquire, and their information was more exact."

They sat in a wine room in an obscure quarter. They were the only guests. From the smoky ceiling hung the great antlers of a stag, to which the electric bulbs had been fastened with an effect of picturesqueness.

Becker wore a dark litevka buttoned to his chin. He looked poor and ill; his bearing had a touch of the subtly fugitive. Sometimes a sad quietude overspread his features, like the quietude of waves where a ship has gone down. In moments of silence his face seemed to become larger, and his gaze to be fixed upon an outer emptiness and an inner flame.

"Are you still in communication with Wiguniewski and the—others?" Christian asked; and his eyes seemed to express a delicate deprecation of the level impersonality of his own demeanour.

Becker shook his head. "My old friends have all turned against me," he replied. "Inwardly I am still deeply at one with them; but I no longer share their views."

"Must one absolutely share the views of one's friends?" Christian asked.

"Yes, in so far as those views express one's central aim in life. The answer depends also on the degree of affection that exists among people. I've tried to win them over, but my

strength failed me. They simply don't understand. Now I no longer feel the urge to shake men and awaken them, unless some one flings his folly at me in the form of a polemic, or unless I feel so close to one that any dissonance between us robs me of peace or weighs upon my heart."

Christian paid less attention to the meaning of the words than to Becker's enchanting intonation, the gentleness of his voice, the wandering yet penetrating glance, the morbid, martyred face. And he thought: "All that they say of him is false." A great trust filled him.

XVI

One night, as they were walking together, Becker spoke of Eva Sorel. "She has attained an extraordinary position," he said. "I've heard people say that she is the real ruler of Russia and is having a decisive influence on European diplomacy. She lives in incomparable luxury. The Grand Duke presented to her the famous palace of Duke Biron of unblessed memory. She receives ministers of state and foreign ambassadors like a crowned sovereign. Paris and London reckon with her, bargain with her, consult her. She will be heard of more and more. Her ambition is inconceivable."

"It was to be foreseen that she would rise high," Christian remarked softly. He wanted more and more to talk to Becker about his own affairs and explain the errand on which he had come. But he did not find the right word.

Becker continued: "Her soul was bound to lose the harmony that rules her body so severely. It is a natural process of compensation. She desires power, insight, knowledge of the obscure and intricate. She plays with the fate of men and nations. Once she said to me, 'The whole world is but a single heart.' Well, one can destroy that single heart, which is all humanity, in one's own bosom. Ambition is but another form of despair; it will carry her to the outermost boundary of life.

There she will meet me and many others who have come to the same spot from another direction, and we shall clasp hands once more."

They had reached the shores of the lake. Becker buttoned his coat and turned up the collar. His voice sank almost to a whisper. "I saw her in Paris once crossing the floor in an old house. In either hand she bore a candelabrum, and in each candelabrum burned two candles. A brownish smoke came from the flames, a white veil flowed from her shoulders; an undreamed-of lightness took possession of me. Once when she was still appearing at the Sapajou, I saw her lying on the floor behind the stage, watching with the intensest scrutiny a spider that was spinning its web in a crack between two boards. She raised her arm and bade me stand still, and lay there and observed the spider. I saw her learning of the spider, and I knew then the power of utter absorption that she had. I scarcely knew it, but she drew me into the burning circle of her being. Her unquenchable thirst for form and creation and unveiling and new vision taught me whom she called her master. Yes, the whole world is but a single heart, and we all serve but a single God. He and I together are my doom."

Christian thought restlessly: "How can I speak to him?" But the right word did not come.

"The other day," Becker said, "I stood in a chapel, lost in the contemplation of a miracle-working image of the Mother of God, and thinking about the simple faith of the people. A few sick men and women and old men were kneeling there and crossing themselves and bowing to the earth. I lost myself in the features of the image, and gradually the secret of its power became clear to me. It was not just a painted piece of wood. For centuries the image had absorbed the streams of passionate prayer and adoration that had come to it from the hearts of the weary and the heavy-laden, and it became filled with a power that seemed to proceed from it to the faithful and that was mirrored in itself again. It became a

living organism, a meeting place between man and God. Filled with this thought, I looked again upon the old men and the women and the children there, and I saw the features of the image stirred by compassion, and I also kneeled down in the dust and prayed."

Christian made no comment. It was not given him to share such feelings. But Becker's speech and ecstatic expression and the great glow of his eyes cast a spell upon him; and in the exaltation which he now felt, his purpose seemed more possible to realize.

Walking restlessly up and down in the inhospitable room of his hotel, he was surprised to find himself in an imaginary conversation with Becker, which drew from him an eloquence that was denied him in the presence of men.

"Hear me. Perhaps you can understand. I possess fourteen millions, but that is not all. More money pours in on me daily and hourly, and I can do nothing to dam the torrent. Not only is the money a vain thing to me, but an actual hindrance. Wherever I turn, it is in my way. Everything I undertake appears in a false light on account of it. It is not like something that belongs to me, but like something that I owe; and every human being with whom I speak explains in some way how and why I owe it to him or to another or to all. Do you understand that?"

Christian had the feeling that he was addressing the Ivan Becker of his imagination in a friendly, natural, and convincing tone; and it seemed to him that Ivan Becker understood and approved. He opened the window, and caught sight of some stars.

"If I distribute it I cause mischief," he continued, and walked up and down again without articulating a sound. "That has been proved. The fault is probably in me; I haven't the art of doing good or useful things with money. And it's unpleasant to have people remind me wherever I go: 'You've got your millions behind you; whenever you have

enough of this, you can quit and go home.' This is the reason why everything glides from my grasp and no ground is secure under my feet; this is the reason why I cannot live as I would live, nor find any pleasantness within myself. Therefore relieve me of my millions, Ivan Michailovitch. Do with them whatever you wish. If necessary we can go to a notary and make out a deed of gift. Distribute the money, if you desire, feed the hungry, and relieve the suffering. I can't do it; it repels me. I want to be rid of my burden. Have books printed or build refuges or bury it or waste it; only take the burden from me. I can only use it to fill maws that afterwards show me their teeth."

And as he spoke those words within himself, a serenity overspread his features. His smooth forehead, his deep blue eyes, his large and rather pallid cheeks, his healthy red lips, and the clean-shaven skin about them were all bathed in that new serenity.

It seemed to him that on the next day, when he would see Becker, he might be able to speak to him quite as he had spoken to-night, or at least nearly so.

XVII

One passed through a little hall-way into a poorly furnished room. There were several young men in this hall. One of these exchanged a few words with Becker, and then went away.

"It's my bodyguard," Becker explained, with a faint smile. "But like all the others they distrust me. They've been ordered not to lose sight of me. Didn't you notice that we were constantly shadowed out of doors?"

Christian shook his head.

"When that unhappy woman pointed her revolver at me in Lausanne," Becker went on, shivering, "her lips flung the word 'traitor' at me. I looked into the black muzzle and awaited

death. She missed me, but since that moment I have been afraid of death. That evening many of my friends came to me, and besought me to clear and justify myself. I replied to them and said: 'If I am to be a traitor in your eyes, I shall not avoid any of the horror, any of the frightfulness of that position.' They did not understand me. But a summons has come to me to destroy, to extinguish and destroy myself. I am to build the pyre on which I am to be consumed. I am to spread my suffering until it infects all who come near me. I am to forget what I have done and abandon hope, and be lowly and loathed and an outcast, and deny principles and break fetters and bow down before the spirit of evil, and bear pain and cause pain, and tear up and plough the earth, even though beautiful harvests be destroyed. Traitor—how little that means! I wander about and hunger after myself. I flee from myself, and yet cry out after myself, and am the sacrificer and the sacrifice. And that has caused an unparalleled increase of pain in the world. The souls of men descend to the source of things in order to become brothers to the damned."

He pressed his hands together and looked like a madman. "My body seeks the earth, the depths, pollution, and the night," he said. "My innermost being gapes like a wound; I feel the thongs and weight of doom and the terror of time; I pray for prayers; I am a shadowy figure in the ghostly procession of created things in travail; the grief that fills the air of the world grinds me to dust; *mea culpa, mea maxima culpa!*"

The feeling of pained embarrassment grew in Christian. He simply looked at Becker.

Suddenly a repeated knocking sounded at the outer door. Becker started and listened. The knocking increased in loudness and speed.

"It has come after all," Becker murmured in consternation. "I must leave. Forgive me, I must leave. A car is waiting for me. Stay a few minutes longer, I beg of you." He took

a valise that lay on the bed, looked about vaguely, pressed his mutilated hand to his coat, and murmured hastily, "Lend me five hundred francs. I spent my last money at noon. Don't be angry with me; I'm in a fearful hurry."

Mechanically Christian took out his wallet and gave Becker five bank-notes. The latter stammered a word of thanks and farewell, and was gone.

Christian left the house fifteen minutes later in a bewildered condition. For hours he wandered in the valleys and on the hills around the city. He took the night train back to Berlin.

During the many hours of the journey he felt very wretched in body and soul.

XVIII

In his flat he found many begging letters, one from his former valet, one from a Society for Succouring the Shelterless, one from a musician whom he had met casually in Frankfort. There was also a letter from the bank, requesting his signature on an enclosed document.

Next day Amadeus Voss asked for six thousand marks; the widow Engelschall, loudly lamenting that her furniture would be sold unless she met a promissory note, asked for three thousand.

He gave and gave, and the act of giving disgusted him. In the lecture halls of the university they came to him—the merest strangers, the most indifferent persons. Wherever he appeared, even in an eating-house, people came to him and told him of their troubles, and were diffident or brazen, and begged or demanded.

He gave and gave, and saw no end to it and no salvation in it, and felt a leaden heaviness steal over him. And he gave and gave.

He saw greed and expectation in every eye. He dressed himself more plainly, he cut down his expenditures to the barest necessities; the gold towered up behind him like rolling lava,

and burned everything he touched. He gave and gave, and people asked and asked.

And so he wrote to his father: "Take my money from me!" He was aware of the strangeness and the unheard-of nature of what he asked, so he accompanied his request with elaborate reasons and persuasive phrases. "Assume that I have emigrated and have been lost sight of, or that I live far away under a false name, or that through your fault or mine there had been a definite breach between us, that you had therefore reduced my allowance to a minimum, but that my pride forbade my accepting even that, since I desire to stand on my own feet and live by the work of my hands. Or else imagine that I had wasted my means, and hopelessly mortgaged the capital and interest still due me. Or, finally, imagine that you yourself had become impoverished, and were forced to withdraw all assistance from me. At all events, I want to live without independent means. I have lost all pleasure in living with them. It is hard, I know, to explain that to any one who has money and has never been without it. Do me this favour! First of all, dispose of the sums that are banked in my name; next stop the income that has hitherto been paid out to me. The money is all yours, indisputably so. During our conversation last year you gave me very clearly and justly to understand that I have always lived on the fruit of your labour."

Lastly he made the proposal to which he had referred in his imaginary conversation with Ivan Becker. "If it wounds your sensibilities to make a personal or practical use of the money which I am returning to you who gave it—use it to build orphanages, homes for foundlings, hospitals, institutions for the disabled, or libraries. There is so much misery in the world, and so much suffering that needs to be alleviated. I cannot do these things. They do not attract me; indeed, the very thought of them is disagreeable. I do not deny that this specific inability argues a weakness in my character; so if you

determine to expend the money upon charities, don't do it in my name."

He ended thus: "I do not know whether it even interests you to have me say that I think of you affectionately. Perhaps in your heart you have already cast me off and separated yourself from me wholly. If any bond is to continue to exist between us, it can only be, however, if you do not refuse me your help in this matter, which is, from one point of view, so difficult, and from another, so perfectly simple."

The letter remained unanswered. But several days after it had been sent, a friend of the Wahnschaffe family, Pastor Werner, called on Christian. He came both on a mission from the Privy Councillor and of his own impulse. Christian had known him since childhood.

XIX

Very attentively the clergyman examined the room, the shabby, ugly furniture, the window shades bordered by sentimental pictures, the dirty, white-washed walls, the dim, little lamp, the split boards of the flooring, the imitation leather of the sofa, the chest of drawers which was broken and which bore a cheap plaster of Paris bust. A dumb yet fiery amazement appeared on his face.

"I am asked to inform you," Pastor Werner said, "that your father is of course ready to comply with your request. What else, after all, can he do? But I need not conceal from you the fact that his anxiety about you is very grave, and that he finds your actions wholly incomprehensible."

Christian answered a little impatiently. "I told him months ago that there wasn't the slightest ground for anxiety."

"You must admit," Werner objected gently, "that your latest plan does involve the question of your very existence. Have you taken up any occupation that secures you from need?"

Christian replied that, as his father was aware, he was definitely preparing himself for a profession. The measure of his talent and success was, of course, still in question.

"And until that profession begins to pay, what will you live on?" the pastor asked "Let me repeat to you the words which your father cried out at our last interview: 'Does he intend to beg? Or to accept gifts from the charitable? Or starve? Or trust to chance and false friends? Or take refuge in shady and dishonourable things, and yet be forced at last, a remorseful fool, to ask for that which he now casts aside?' I have never in all these many years seen your father in such a state of mind, or heard him express such grief and such passion."

"My father may calm himself," Christian replied. "Nothing of what he fears is likely to happen; nor what, perhaps, he hopes, namely, that I shall ask my patrimony back again. It is as inconceivable as that the bird should return to the egg or the burning log to the tree whence it came."

"Then you did not intend to renounce all pecuniary assistance at once?" the pastor asked, feeling his way carefully.

"No." Christian hesitated. "I suppose not. I'm not equal to that; not yet. One has to learn that. It is a difficult thing and must be learned; and life in a great city would involve fatal and disturbing elements. Then, too, I have assumed certain obligations; there are several people who have definitely been counting on my help. I don't know whether they could follow my own course. I haven't in fact, any programme at all. What good would it do me? My great aim just now is to get into a situation that is clear and reasonable, and get rid of all sorts of stupid torments. I want to drop the burden of the superfluous; and everything is superfluous except what I and those few people absolutely need on the most stringent estimate. But every supposed need, I think, can be reduced, until such gradual renunciation produces a profit."

"If I understand you correctly," the pastor said, "it is

your intention to retain such a portion of your fortune as will secure you against actual need."

Christian sat down at the table and rested his head on his hand. "Yes," he said softly. "Yes. But there the great difficulty arises. I cannot fix the boundary between necessity and superfluity in terms of money. Unhappily I was brought up amid conditions that make it hard for me to have a practical opinion on this net basis. I lack a norm of what is necessary and what is dispensable, and I lack it especially where others are concerned. You've understood me quite rightly. I want to retain a part, but only a very small part; and I hate to bargain with myself over the exact amount. The whole question of money is so absurd and trivial; it is only dragged in the wake of the really important things. One thing I couldn't endure; and that would be to invest a capital, however modest, and use the interest. Then I'd be a capitalist again, and back in the world of the protected. But what other way is there? You're an experienced man. Advise me."

The clergyman considered. From time to time he looked searchingly at Christian; then he lowered his eyes and reflected again. "I am rather confounded by your words," he confessed at last. "Much that you say surprises me—no, everything—yet it also seems to give me a certain insight. Very well then; you ask my advice." Again he thought, and again observed Christian. "You renounce your personal fortune as well as the income which the firm and family have paid you. So far, so good. This renunciation will be officially acknowledged. I am also willing to believe that you will never ask back what you now renounce. The manner in which you bind yourself impresses me more than many solemn oaths would do. You are through with your past. That, too, will be respected on the other side. I understand the spiritual pain caused you by the question as to what leeway you should permit yourself in the matter of your personal and bodily

needs during the period on which you are entering, and which will be bitter and full of necessities for self-conquest. I understand that. The problem is one of inner delicacy, of spiritual modesty. To consider it runs counter to your feelings and attitude. Yes, I understand that."

Christian nodded, and the pastor continued in a raised voice. "Then listen to me. What I shall propose is subtle and difficult. It is almost like a game or a trick. You may remember that I am chaplain of the prison at Hanau. I try to help the souls of the lost and the outcast. I study these people. I know their inmost motives, the darkness of their hearts, their frozen yearnings. I dare to assert that there is not one of them who cannot, in the higher sense, be saved, nor one whose heart will not be reached by simple words earnestly realized in action. That awakens the divine spark, and the vision of such an awakening is beautiful. I serve my cause with all my strength, and the improvement and transformation of some of my flock has been so complete, that they have returned into society as new men, and bravely resisted all temptations. I admit that success often depends on my ability to save them from immediate need. Here is my problem. Kindly people help; the state, too, though in its frugal manner, contributes. But it is not enough. How would it be if from the fortune which you are returning to your father a capital were to be deducted the interest of which is to be used for my discharged convicts? Don't draw back, but hear me out. This capital would be in good securities and would amount, let us say, to three hundred thousand marks. The interest would be in the neighbourhood of fifteen thousand marks. That would suffice. A great deal of good could be done with it. To touch or sell the securities would be a privilege reserved to you alone. From the capital itself you take in monthly or quarterly installments such sum or sums as you need to live on. To draw and expend the interest should be a privilege reserved to me and my successors. All these conditions must

be secured by legal means. The purpose, as you see, is a double one. First, the plan will effect a great and needed good; secondly, it furnishes an inherent norm and aim for you. Every superfluous or thoughtless expenditure of yours jeopardizes a human soul; every frugality you practise is at once translated into concrete human weal. That gives you a point of orientation, a line of moral action. It is, if I may call it so, an automatic moral mechanism. I judge that the independence you desire will be achieved in two or three years. Within that time you can hardly use up even one-tenth of the capital according to your present standard of life. Of course, even this plan involves a problem for you, but it is a problem that would, I think, attract you. You don't have to think of my humanitarian aims. I know that in your letter to your father you expressed your dislike of such aims, a dislike which I have no means of understanding. But I could tell you things and relate circumstances that would show you how the subtlest fibres of humanity are poisoned, and what a sacred duty it is to plough up the spiritual soil in my particular little field. If you could once see face to face some of these men restored to freedom and hope, your heart would be won for my cause. It is such visible evidence that instructs and converts."

"You have too high an opinion of me," Christian said, with his old, equivocal smile. "It's always the same. Everybody overestimates me in this respect and judges me wrongly. But don't bother about that, and don't ask about it. It doesn't matter."

"And what answer do you make to my proposal?"

Christian lowered his head, and said: "It's a nice little trap that you are setting for me. Let me consider it a moment. I am to feed, one might say, on my own charity. What a horrible word that is—charity. And by feeding on it myself I, of course, diminish it. And that, you think, will constitute a sort of moral gymnastic for me, and make it easier to realize my purpose——?"

"Yes, that was what, since you have chosen this path, I had in mind."

"Well, if I disappoint you, you will have nothing to regret but your own modesty," Christian continued, with a peculiarly mocking expression. "You could ask twice or even three times the sum you named, and I would probably or, rather, assuredly not refuse. For into whose pockets the millions go that I refuse, is a matter I care little about. Why don't you do that and thus decrease your own risk?"

"Is your question inspired by distrust of the cause I represent?"

"I don't know. Answer it, if you don't mind."

"I've explained the situation to you. The circumstances themselves are the guide to what I can and ought to ask for. On the one hand there is an urgent need. On the other hand there are definite considerations that not only set a natural limit, but forbid my using this opportunity in such a way as to give a handle to the malicious and quarrelsome."

Christian continued his purely argumentative resistance. "Do you think it means anything to me or attracts me to know that you will give some discharged criminal, whose moral nature you think you have saved, one or two hundred marks to start life anew? That doesn't mean a thing to me. I don't know those men. I don't know how they look or act or talk or smell, or what they'll do with the money, or whether it will really be of service to them. And since I don't know that, the arrangement has no meaning to me."

Pastor Werner was taken aback. "To be sure," he replied. "But I do know them, you see."

Christian smiled again. "We're very differently constituted; we neither think nor act alike." Suddenly he looked up. "But I'm not making these objections to create difficulties. Quite the contrary. You personally ask me for assistance and I personally render it. In return you do me the service of acting as my paymaster and showing me how to

solve my problem. I hope you will have no reason to complain."

"Then you do consent and I may proceed to make definite arrangements?" the clergyman asked, half delighted and half doubtful still.

Christian nodded. "Go ahead," he said. "Make what arrangements seem best to you. It's all too trivial to bother about."

"What do you mean by that exactly?" Werner asked, just as Eva had once, between laughter and amazement, asked his meaning. "A while ago you also said that what was really important was dragged down by these matters of money. What is the truly important thing to you?"

"I can't explain that to you. But I feel the triviality of all this. All I am doing is the merest beginning, and everyone overestimates it absurdly and makes a mountain of this molehill. I haven't reached the real difficulty yet. And that will consist in earning back all one has given away—earning it back in another manner, and so, above all, that one does not feel one's loss."

"Strange," murmured the pastor. "It is strange. To hear you talk, one would think you were discussing a sporting event or a matter of barter."

Christian laughed.

The pastor came up to him and laid a hand on his shoulder. His eyes were serious as he asked: "Where is the woman whom you . . . have taken in?"

Christian's reply was a gesture in the direction of Karen's flat.

A thought that was strange and new seemed to flash into the clergyman's mind. "Then you don't live with her?" His voice sank to a whisper. "You are not living together?"

"No," Christian answered with a frown. "Certainly not."

The pastor's arm dropped. There came a long silence. Then he spoke again: "Your father is stricken to the heart by a

feeling as though several people whom he loves had succumbed to the same disease. He tries to hide his emotion, but he doesn't succeed. Before he had any reason to be anxious about you, he once spoke to me of your sister Judith. He used the expression, 'self-degradation.' He described her as afflicted by a perverse impulse toward self-degradation."

Christian swept the matter aside with a vivid gesture. "Oh, yes, Judith! She flings a trivial challenge at the world. That's no self-degradation. She's curious as to how far she dare go, how far others will go for her, and what the upshot will be. She confessed as much to me. She'll plunge into water and be affronted because it's wet; she'll go through fire in the hope that it won't burn her. After her experiment she'll hate both fire and water. No, I have nothing in common with that."

"You speak very harshly for a brother," the pastor said with gentle reproachfulness. "However that may be, this new trouble has wounded your father to the very core. He feels that all his life's effort is being negated from within, and that the fruit of all his toil is rotting in his hands. He stood on the very peaks of success. What does it mean to him now? His own flesh and blood rises up against him. His hand seemed blessed; he feels it withering now. His wealth carried him to a very great height. Now he is lonely there, and the son who, above all others, should rejoice in that station, turns from him, and fills him with a feeling for which he knows no name but shame and disgrace."

Christian did not answer. He seemed quite indifferent. Werner continued: "I ask you to consider the social structure of mankind. Cruelty and force may seem to cling to it, yet there is something infinitely delicate and venerable within. You might liken it to a tree, deep-rooted in the earth, expanding in the air with many branches and twigs, buds and blossoms. It has come to be through some action of God, and no one should contemn it."

"Why do you tell me that?" Christian asked, with a subtle withdrawal of himself.

"Because your father suffers. Go to him, and explain yourself and your ways. You are his son; it is your duty."

Christian shook his head. "No," he answered. "I cannot."

"And your mother? Do I have to remind you of her too? I did not think I should have to admonish you in her name. She waits. All her days are one long waiting."

Once more Christian shook his head. "No," he said, "I cannot."

The pastor buried his chin in his hollow hand and looked dully at the floor. He left with divided feelings.

XX

Crammon desired a friend. The one who was lost could never be replaced. The hope of winning him back still smouldered within, but the empty space in his bosom was desolate and chill. To install a lodger there seemed wise and would be stimulating.

Franz Lothar von Westernach had the first claim upon the place. They had agreed by letter to meet at Franz Lothar's country house in Styria, so at the beginning of spring Crammon left Vienna. At Nürnberg he left in the lurch a certain handsome Miss Herkinson in whose car he had travelled from Spa.

To an acquaintance whom, by a mere chance, he met in the dining-car, he said, "I can no longer bear the noise that young people always make. The subdued and clarified attracts me now. The fifth decade of our lives demands milder ways."

Crammon found Franz Lothar in the thick of a mental struggle. His sister Clementine wanted him to get married. Laughing and yet helpless, he confided the state of affairs to Crammon. His sister had picked out a girl of excellent family, and was sure that the alliance would have a wholesome in-

fluence on her brother's career, as well as on his uncertain and idle way of life. All preliminaries had been arranged, and the parents of the young lady had intimated their full approval.

Crammon said: "Don't let them take you in, my son. The affair can have none but a disgraceful outcome. I do not know the girl in question personally. But she is a vampire. Her ancestors were among the most infamous robber knights of the Middle Ages. Later they came into conflict with the empire on account of cruelty to their serfs. You can imagine what your future would be."

Franz Lothar was highly amused. Crammon's rage at the thought of being robbed of this friend too, in the same old stupid way, was positively rabid and passed all the bounds of decency. He treated Clementine with embittered silence. If any dispute arose, he barked at her like an angry dog.

Franz Lothar's own indecision and fear of change saved Crammon from further conflicts. He simply informed his disappointed sister one day that he was thoroughly unprepared for so important a step, and begged her to break off the negotiations.

This turn of affairs satisfied Crammon, but brought him no definite peace of mind. He wanted to prevent the possibility of a similar assault on his contentment. The best thing seemed to be to marry off Clementine herself. It would not be easy. She was no longer in her first youth; she had had her experiences and knew her world; she possessed a clear vision and a sharp understanding. Great care would have to be taken. He looked about in his mind for a candidate, and his choice fell on a man of considerable wealth, distinguished ancestry, and spotless reputation, the Cavaliere Morini. He had made his acquaintance years ago through friends in Trieste.

He took to cultivating Clementine's society. Fragrant little anecdotes of married bliss and unstilled longing and cosy households flowed from his lips. He found her very receptive. He

dropped, as though casually, intimations of his friendship with an uncommonly distinguished and able Italian gentleman. He built up the character with an artist's care, and turned the excellent cavaliere into a striking figure. Next he wrote to Morini, feigned deep concern for his well-being, recalled the memory of hours they had passed together, pretended a great longing and a desire to see him again, and inquired after his plans. So soon as the correspondence flourished it was not difficult to mention Clementine and praise her admirable qualities.

Morini nibbled at the bait. He wrote that he would be in Vienna in May, and would be charmed to meet Crammon there. He added that he dared scarcely hope to meet the Baroness von Westernach at the same time. Crammon thought, "The old idiot!" but he persuaded Franz Lothar and Clementine to promise to join him in Vienna. The plan succeeded; Morini and Clementine liked each other at once. Crammon said to her: "You have charmed him wholly." And to him: "You have made an ineffaceable impression on her." Two weeks later the betrothal took place. Clementine seemed to revive and was full of gratitude toward Crammon. What he had planned, hardly with the purest intentions, became an unalloyed blessing to her.

Crammon bestowed upon himself the recognition he held to be his due. His action was as useful as any other. He said: "Be fruitful and multiply! I shall be the godfather of your first-born. It goes without saying that I shall celebrate that event with a solemn feast."

Furthermore he said: "In the records of history I shall be known as Bernard the Founder. Perhaps I am myself the remote ancestor of a race destined to fame—a race of kings. Who can tell? In that case my far descendants, whom God protect, will have every reason to regard me with veneration."

But all this was but the deceptive flash of a fleeting mood. The worm of doubt burrowed in his mind. The future seemed

black to him. He prophesied war and revolution. He took no joy in himself or in his deeds. When he lay in bed and the lights were out, he felt surrounded by troops of evils; and these evils fought with one another for the chance to lacerate him first. Then he would close his eyes, and sigh deeply.

Fräulein Aglaia became aware of his depression, and admonished him to pray more industriously. He thanked her for her counsel, and promised to follow it.

XXI

The sweetishly luring waltz arose. Amadeus Voss ordered champagne. "Drink, Lucile," he said, "drink, Ingeborg! Life is short, and the flesh demands its delight; and what comes after is the horror of hell."

He leaned back in his chair and compressed his lips. The two ladies, dressed with the typical extravagance of the Berlin cocotte, giggled. "The dear little doctor is as crazy as they're made," one of the two said. "What's that rot he's talking again? Is it meant to be indecent or gruesome? You never can tell."

The other lady remarked deprecatingly: "He's had a wonderful dinner, he's smoking a Henry Clay, he's in charming company, and he talks about the horror of hell. You don't need us nor the Esplanade for that! I don't like such expressions. Why don't you pull yourself together, and try to be normal and good-natured and to have a little spirit, eh?"

They both laughed. Voss blinked his eyes in a bored way. The sweetishly luring waltz ended with an unexpected crash. The naked arms and shoulders, the withering faces of young men, the wrinkled corruption of faces more aged—all blended in the tobacco fumes into a glimmer as of mother of pearl. Visitors to the city came in from the street. They stared into the dazzling room half greedily and half perplexed. Last of

all a young girl entered and remained standing at the door. Amadeus Voss jumped up. He had recognized Johanna Schöntag.

He went up to her and bowed. Taken by surprise she smiled with an eagerness that she at once regretted. He asked her questions. She gave a start, as though something were snapping within her, and turned cold eyes upon him. She shuddered at him in memory of her old shudders. Her face was more unbeautiful than ever, but the charm of her whole personality more compelling.

She told him that she had arrived two days ago. At present she was in a hotel, but on the morrow she would move to the house of a cousin near the Tiergarten.

"So you have rich relations?" Voss said tactlessly. He smiled patronizingly, and asked her how long she intended to stay in this nerve-racking city.

Probably throughout the autumn and winter, she told him. She added that she didn't feel Berlin to be nerve-racking, only tiresome and trivial.

He asked her whether he would have the pleasure of seeing her soon, and remarked that if Wahnschaffe knew she was here, he would assuredly look her up.

He talked with an insistent courtesy and worldly coolness that had apparently been recently acquired. Johanna's soul shrank from him. When he named Christian's name she grew pale, and looked toward the stairs as though seeking help. In her trouble the little nursery rhyme came to her which was often her refuge in times of trouble: "If only some one kind and strong, would come this way and take me along." Then she smiled. "Yes, I want to see Christian," she said suddenly; "that is why I have come."

"And I?" Voss asked. "What are you going to do with me? Am I to be discarded? Can't I be of assistance to you in any way? Couldn't we take a little walk together? There's a good deal to be discussed."

"Nothing that I know of," Johanna replied. She wrinkled her forehead like one who was helpless and at bay. To get rid of the burden of his insistence courteously, she promised to write him; but she had scarcely uttered the words when they made her very unhappy. A promise had something very binding to her. It made her feel a victim; and the uncanny tension which this man caused her to feel paralyzed her will, and yet had a morbid attraction for her.

Voss drove home in a motor car. His mind was filled by one gnawing, flaring thought: Had she been Christian's mistress or not? From the moment he had seen Johanna again, this question had assumed an overwhelming importance in his mind. It involved possession and renunciation, ultimate veracity and deceit; it involved inferences that inflamed his senses, and possibilities that threatened to be decisive in his life. He fixed his thoughts upon the image of Johanna's face, and studied it like a cabalistic document. He argued and analysed and shredded motives and actions like a pettifogger. For his darkened life had again been entered by one who caused strange entanglements and enchainments and focused all decisions in one point. He felt the presage of storms such as he had not ever known.

Next morning, when he came from his bath and was about to sit down to breakfast, his housekeeper said to him: "Fräulein Engelschall is here to see you. She's in the sitting-room."

He swallowed his chocolate hastily and went in. Karen sat at a round table, and looked at photographs that were lying on it. They all belonged to Christian and were pictures of friends, of landscapes and houses, of dogs and horses.

Karen wore a very simple suit of blue. Her yellow hair was hidden by a grey felt hat adorned by a silk riband. Her face was thin, her skin pale, her expression sombre.

She disdained to use any introductory turns of speech and said: "I've come to ask you if you know about things. He

might have told you first; he didn't tell me till yesterday. So you don't know? Well, you couldn't have done nothing about it either. He's given away all his money. All the money he had, he's given to his father. The rest too, that came in by the year, I don't know how many hundred thousands—he's refused that too. He kept his claim to just a little,—not much more than to keep from starving, and, by what he told me, he can't use that the way he wants to. And you know how he is; he won't change. It's just like when the sexton's through ringing the church bell; you can't get back the sound of the chiming. It makes me feel like screaming, like just lying down and screaming. I says to him: 'My God, what've you gone and done?' And he made a face, as if he was surprised to see any one get excited over a little thing like that. And now I ask you: Can he do that? Is it possible? Does the law allow it?"

Amadeus was quite silent. His face was ashen. Yellow sparks leaped behind his lenses. Twice he passed his hand over his mouth.

Karen got up and walked up and down. "That's the way things are," she muttered, and with grim satisfaction her eyes wandered about the elegant room. "First on the box and then in the dirt. That's the way it is. Far's I'm concerned I could make my bargain now—if only it's not too late. Maybe it is, maybe I've waited too long. We'll see. Anyhow, what good's the money to me? Maybe I'd better wait a while longer." She stepped to the other side of the table, and caught sight of a photograph which she had not yet seen. It was a picture of Frau Wahnschaffe, and showed her in full evening dress, wearing her famous rope of pearls which, though slung twice, hung down over her bosom.

Karen grasped the picture, and regarded it with raised brows. "Who's this? Looks like him. His mother, I suppose. Is it his mother?" Voss's only answer was a nod. In greedy astonishment she went on: "Look at those pearls! Can they be

real? Is it possible? Why, they must be the size of a baby's fist! " In her pale eyes there was a hot glow; her wicked little nether teeth gnawed at her lip: " Can I keep this? " she asked. Voss did not answer. She looked about hastily, wrapped the photograph in a piece of newspaper and slid it under her jacket. " Good Lord, man, why don't you say something? " She flung the question at Voss brutally. " You look like hell. But don't you think I feel it too? More than you perhaps. You got legs of your own to stand on like the rest of us! " She gave a cynical laugh, glanced once more at Voss and at the room, and then she went.

For a while Voss sat without moving. Again and again he passed his hand over his mouth; then he jumped up and hurried into the bedroom. He went to the dressing-table on which lay the precious toilet articles that Christian had left behind him—gold-backed brushes and combs, gold-topped flasks, gold cases and boxes for salves and shaving powder. With feverish haste Voss swept these things into a heap, and threw them into a leather hand-bag which he locked and secured in a closet. Then he went back to the sitting-room, and paced up and down with folded arms. His face shrunk more and more like the faces of the dead.

Then he stood still, made the sign of the cross, and said: " Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

XXII

An old-fashioned phaeton was waiting at the station. Botho von Thüngen got into it. He wrapped his feet in the carriage robes, for the evening was cool and the drive to the manor house long. The road passed straight across the flat Brandenburg plain.

Botho sat rigidly erect in the carriage and thought over the coming interview with the baron, his grandfather, who had summoned him. Herr von Grunow-Reckenhausen of Recken-

hausen was the head of the family, final judge in all controversies and court of last appeal. His sentences and commands were no more to be disputed than those of the king. His sons, his sons-in-law, and his grandsons trembled before him.

The ramifications of the family spread far and wide. Its members were in the government and in the Reichstag; they were general officers in the army, landed proprietors, industrial magnates, superior deaconesses of the state church, governors of provinces, and judges in the higher courts. On the occasion of Bismarck's death, the old baron had retired from public life.

Black and verging upon ruin, the manor house arose in its neglected park. Two great Danes growled as they emerged from the entrance hall, which was illuminated by candles. The rather desolate hall in which Botho faced his grandfather at supper was also lit by candles. Everything about the house had a ghastly air—the shabby wall-hangings, the cracked and dusty stucco of the ceilings, the withered flowers on the table, the eighteenth century china, the two dogs who lay at the baron's feet, and not least the old baron himself, whose small head and oblong, lean, malicious face bore a resemblance to the later pictures of Frederick the Great.

They remained in the hall. The baron sat down in an armchair by the fire. A silent, white-haired servitor threw logs into the fireplace, cleared the table, and withdrew.

"On the first you are going to Stockholm," the old gentleman declared, and with a moan wrapped his plaid shawl tighter about him. "I've written to our ambassador there; his father was an old friend and fraternity brother of mine, and he will be sure to befriend you. So soon as you return to Berlin, be sure to call on the secretary of state. Give him my regards. He knows me well; we were in the field together in the year 'seventy."

Botho cleared his throat. But the old baron neither desired

nor expected an interruption. He continued: "Your mother and I have agreed that your engagement is to be officially announced within a few days. Things have dragged on long enough. Next winter you two are to marry. You are in luck, my boy. Not only has Sophie Aurore a princely estate and a million in cash, but she's a beauty of the first order, and a racy one to boot. By Gad, sir, you hardly deserve that, and you seem hardly to appreciate it."

"I feel very close to Sophie Aurore, and love her very dearly," Botho replied diffidently.

"You say that, and you look as nervous as a cat when it thunders." The old gentleman was irate. "That sort of effeminate and sentimental twaddle is sickening. We weren't debating whether you loved her or not, and I didn't ask you. It would be much more pertinent to ask you about your recent conduct. And if I did, the best thing you could do would be to observe silence in seven languages, as the late lamented Schleiermacher used to say. You ran after a dancing woman, wasted a fortune, and almost missed the proper moment for entering upon your career. Well, I understand that. Madness, of course. But I was young once. Wild oats. But that, as I am told, you consort with filthy proletarians, spend your nights in God knows what dens, and frequent meetings of the Salvation Army—that surpasses both belief and decency. I thought I'd let those things be, but you have a trick of rousing one's gall. What I wanted to do was this: to give you definite directions and get a definite answer."

"Very well. My answer is that I can neither go to Stockholm nor marry Sophie Aurore."

The old baron almost flew out of his chair. "What——? You——? I don't——!" He grew inarticulate.

"I am already married."

"You are already . . . . already . . . . what!" The old man, greenish pale, stared at his grandson, and collapsed in his chair.

"I have married a girl whom I seduced three years ago. She was the daughter of my landlady. You know what life is like. After a night of revelry I came back to my rooms rather drunk and morally insensitive. The girl was a seamstress in a fashionable tailoring establishment. It was early morning and she was on her way to work. I drew her into my room. When she gave birth to my child, I was far away, and had long forgotten the incident. Her parents disowned her; the child was boarded out and died; the girl herself sank lower and lower. It's a common enough story. Through an unescapable dispensation of fate I met her again two months ago, and learned of all the wretchedness she had gone through. In the meantime my views of life had undergone a radical change, chiefly through my meeting a . . . peculiar personality. I did my duty. I know that I have lost everything—my future, my happiness, the love of my mother and my betrothed, the advantages of my birth, the respect of my equals. But I could not do differently."

The young man's firm and quiet words seemed to have turned the baron to stone. The bushy eyebrows almost hid the eyes beneath; the bitter mouth was but a cavern between chin and nose. "Is that so?" he said after a while in the wheezing pipe of age. "Is that so? You come to me with a *fait accompli* and with one of a particularly loathsome sort. Well, well. I haven't any desire to bandy words with a God damned fool. The necessary steps will be taken. All support will be withdrawn from you, and you will be put under lock and key where you belong. Fortunately there are madhouses in Prussia, and I am not quite without influence. It would be a nice spectacle, would it not, a Botho Thüngen publicly wallowing in the gutter? A new triumph for the Jewish press! Yes, no doubt. I needn't stop to remark that we are strangers from this day on. You need expect no consideration under any circumstances. Unfortunately I must endure your presence in

the house to-night. The horses are too tired to drive back to the station."

Botho had arisen. He passed his hands several times over his reddish blond hair. His freckled face had a sickish pallor. "I can go on foot," he said. But he listened and heard the downpour of rain, and the thought of the long tramp frightened him. Then he said: "Are you so sure of your own righteousness? Do you feel so utterly sure of all you have and do and say? I don't deny that your threats frighten me. I know that you will try to carry them out. But my conviction cannot be changed by that fact."

The baron's only answer was a commanding gesture toward the door.

In the room which had been prepared for him, Botho sat down at a table, and by the light of a candle wrote with feverish intensity:

"Dear Wahnschaffe:—My difficult task is accomplished. My grandfather sat before me strong as a cliff; I received his verdict like a shaking coward. The fieriest emotions turn into lies before these inexorable souls, whose prejudices are their laws and whose caste is their fate. Ah, their courage in living themselves out! Their iron souls and foreheads! And I, on the other hand, I am the *reductio ad absurdum* of my race; I am a prodigal son from top to toe. Somewhere I read about a man who overcame God through the strength of his utter weakness. This sombre landscape, this rigid northern world—what could it produce as an adversary of that old Torquemada of high lineage but an hysterical revolutionary like myself?

"My childhood, my boyhood, my youth, these are but paragraphs in a heartless tract on the art of seeming what one is not, of striving for what is without worth. I knew as little about myself as the nut's kernel knows of the nut. I idled and drank and gambled, and made a prostitute of time itself, which had to please me or en-

dure my hate. We were all blind and deaf and unfeeling. But it is a crime to gain sight and hearing and a heart. I met Sophie Aurore and loved her. But I loved her imperfectly, for I was a man with crippled senses. One is supposed to sow one's wild oats, as you know; and one is supposed to do that before uniting one's life with a being whose image and memory should be too sacred to be dragged through vice and dirt. But some fate in this mad world brought me under the influence of Eva Sorel. For the first time I learned what a woman truly is and what her significance may be. It helped me to understand Sophie and to feel what I must be to her.

"And then I saw you, Christian. Do you recall the day when you read those French verses to Eva and the others? The way you did it forced me to think of you for days and days. And do you remember how in Hamburg you broke the silver handle of the whip with which Eva had struck your friend's face? The scales dropped from my eyes. I remained on your track; I sought every opportunity of being near you. You did not know it. When you disappeared I looked for you. They told me you were in Berlin, and I sought and at last found you, and under what conditions? My soul was so terribly full that neither then nor later could I explain to you the inexplicable mystery and strange magnetism that drew me to you. To-day I had to speak out to you, and the words that I address to you give me strength.

"I need consolation. I love Sophie Aurore and I shall love her till I die. The letter of parting which I had to write her was the bitterest thing in all my useless and mistaken life. She has not answered it. I have broken her life and trodden on her heart, but I have saved another life and kept another heart from despair. Have I done right? When people used to talk of sacrificing oneself for a cause or for another human being, it always seemed empty verbiage to me. Since I have known you, the thought has acquired a deeply serious significance. All this may sound

strange to you and even discordant. You do not brood nor take yourself spiritually to task; and that is the incomprehensible thing about you. Yet I know none but you whom I would make the arbiter of my conscience and whom I would ask: Have I done right? "

XXIII

The latch must have been left open. Isolde Schirmacher had been the last to go out. Twilight had just fallen when the door of the room opened, and Niels Heinrich entered.

Karen did not get up. She looked over at him. She wanted to speak, but the words seemed to perish in the drouth of her throat.

His face had its usual expression of impudent disgust. His flat, eternally sniffing, and inquisitive nose had a yellow tinge. He wore a blue cap, baggy trowsers, and a yellow shawl slung around his neck.

Wrinkling his nose like a dog he looked about him. Then he closed his left eye and spat.

At last Karen murmured: " What do you want? "

He shrugged his shoulders, and showed his neglected teeth. In one, near the corner of his mouth, he had a large gold-filling which was evidently new.

" Well, what is it? " Karen asked again. There was the fear in her voice that she felt so often now.

Again he showed his decayed front-teeth. It might have been a smile. He went up to the chest of drawers and pulled out one of the drawers. Deliberately he rummaged among its contents. He took out under garments, neck-wear, stockings, corsets, and threw them on the floor. He went on to the second drawer, then to the third, and littered the floor with what he found. Then he approached the wardrobe, but it was locked. He stretched out his hand toward her with a speaking gesture of command. Karen saw the destruction and confusion

he had caused, and did not respond at once. An hallucination as of renewed impoverishment flamed up in her blunted soul. Niels Heinrich seemed its messenger. She was so in fear of him that she wanted to cry out. He made a grimace and gently swung his hand about on the pivot of his wrist. Karen acknowledged the compulsion of that gesture; she put her hand into her pocket, and gave him the key.

He wrenched open the door of the wardrobe, peered in, hauled out card-board boxes, which he calmly overturned, threw garments on the floor as he had thrown the linen, finally discovered a wooden box, and pried off the cover with his knife. He found a golden brooch, the old brooch with the motto, "Ricordo di Venezia," and a little silver chain. He slipped these three objects into his pocket. Then he went into the adjoining room, where Karen heard him moving about. There was no expression in her staring eyes. He came back at the end of a few minutes. It had grown dark, and in the inner room a candle which he had lit was left burning. In passing he threw a contemptuous glance at the cradle. He did not take the trouble to close the outer door behind him.

In the dim light that shone in from the inner room, Karen surveyed her scattered possessions. Suddenly she put her hand into her bosom, drew forth the photograph of Frau Wahnschaffe, and lost herself in an absorbed and sombre contemplation of it.

She saw the pearls, only the pearls.

XXIV

At the foot of the stairs by the street door, Niels Heinrich saw the figure of Ruth Hofmann. She was waiting for her brother, who had gone across the street to buy bread. The lad limped a little, and Ruth had never been able to fight off the fear that he would be run over.

She looked at the pavement, glittering under the street

lamps, at the light of other lamps in the many windows, and finally higher, where she was accustomed to see the stars, but where now there was only the confused and reddish glow of clouds.

Niels Heinrich stopped. Ruth looked up at him with her large grey eyes. He took in all details of the little figure—the thick hair with its curling ends, the shabby flannel dress, the soiled, worn shoes, and last of all the clear, pale face flooded with an alien spiritual life. His glance clung savagely to her, and ripped the garments from her body. The girl, shuddering as she had never done before, chilled to the marrow by an unknown force, turned away toward the stairs, and hesitantly began to mount them.

Niels Heinrich looked after her. "Jew wench!" he murmured from clenched teeth. A greeting from the home-coming Gisevius awakened him from his thoughts. He lit a cigar, pushed the blue cap down toward the nape of his neck, and slouched down the street.

XXV

Toward the end of May Letitia gave birth to twins—both girls. Stephen had the feeling that this was rather excessive; nevertheless festivities were arranged. The house and garden were hung with gay lanterns, the neighbours were invited, and the common people fed. There was music and dancing and shouting. His brothers got drunk and brawled, and there were wild goings-on.

Letitia lay in her handsome bed under the sky-blue canopy. From time to time she asked to see the twins. Each was presented appetizingly reposing on a pillow. They were mysteriously alike. The nurse, who bore the mellifluous name Eleutheria, brought them in—one on her right arm, one on her left. One had a red riband fastened to its shoulder, the other a green; this was for identification. The red-ribanded baby

was to be christened Georgette, the other Christina. Such was Letitia's wish. Stephen desired each child to have in addition a string of richer and more gorgeous names. Tirelessly he turned the pages of all the novels and chronicles within reach, and finally brought a florilegium of names to his wife: Honorata, Friedegunda, Reinilda, Roswitha, Portiuncula, Symphorosa, Sigolina, Amalberga. Letitia laughed until she cried. She pointed to the ugly nurse and said: "None has so beautiful a sound as Eleutheria. I insist on Georgette and Christina." And already she knew that Christina was going to be her favourite.

She looked so charming as she lay there that people came to admire her as one admires a painting. These people were all uneducated and stupid, and Letitia was bored. Sometimes she played chess with Esmeralda, and the girl, drunk with curiosity, asked her a thousand questions. When Letitia was in labour, the girl had lain huddled on the verandah, and her crude and sensual imagination was filled with images that both allured and horrified her. Letitia felt that and said: "Go away! I don't like you to-day."

She seemed to herself beloved of God and blessed by His angels. She was proud of being what she was—an unusual being chosen for an unusual fate. She seemed new to herself in every way. She loved herself, but there was no raw selfishness nor idle admiration in this love. It was something akin to the gratitude and joy of one who had been found worthy of great gifts.

The fact that she possessed two children, two real children with little hands and feet, who could struggle and cry, who could be dressed and undressed, who could be fed and caressed —no, it was not this fact that filled her so full of happiness. It was the expectation that grew out of the children, the mystery of these unknown personalities whose being and becoming proceeded from her own. And so she lay there, lovely, dainty, serene, given over to her dreams.

In the meantime Stephen and old Gunderam renewed their old fight over the Escurial. "The contract's a scrap of paper," the old man jeered. "Two girls don't make one boy. I'm not looking out for quantity. Two hens don't make a rooster." Stephen shouted that he was not going to be cheated of his rightful inheritance, that he would take the matter into court, and make a public scandal of it. The old man, his hands at his hips, had no reply but an evil chuckle. So the quarrelling went on, morning, noon, and night. The old man locked his door, and had the boxes that had stood packed for twenty years gotten into final readiness. Stephen smashed plates and glasses, threw chairs about, cursed and threatened, rode horses half to death, was himself seized with convulsions, sent for a doctor, and had morphine injections prescribed to quiet him.

Partisanship rose high. The old man gained the support of his wife, Stephen that of his brothers. The latter made the servants rebellious, and Doña Barbara shrieked and cursed them. The brawls increased in violence; night was full of ghastly rumours. Once the report of a pistol rang out, and every one rushed into the open. Stephen was missing. He lay abed with a smoking revolver and moaned. He had aimed at his heart and hit a medicine bottle. Its fragments swam in a yellow liquid on the floor. The old man said: "I'm not surprised that a man who's such a fool as a lawyer can't shoot straight. But it takes a damned lot of malice to aim as badly as that." Whereupon Doña Barbara could not help observing: "Only a Gunderam could say anything so vile!" And so the two old people quarrelled until dawn.

Stephen succumbed more and more to the use of morphine. When he was not under its influence he tormented man and beast. His brothers finally rebelled against the insults which he heaped upon them. They laid a plot, and fell upon him and beat him so that he roared like a buffalo. Letitia rushed to help him, and summoned men servants. A regular battle ensued. "Don't leave me," Stephen whined, and she had to

sit down by him, and offer him consolation from the depths of her contempt. He asked her to read him poetry, and she consented. She did not read poems of her own choice, but easy, sentimental verses by second-rate writers. Among the fifteen or sixteen volumes which formed the family library, there was a greasy copy of an old-fashioned anthology of German verse. She read from it, and Stephen said: "What wonderful words!" And he wept.

But at other times he treated her with coldness and contempt; for, in the last analysis, she seemed to him to bear the guilt of all his failures and troubles. Letitia was quite indifferent; her mind was made up. Strength was given her will by the very horror with which the house and its inhabitants, the family and its life, the land and its whole atmosphere filled her. Whenever Stephen wanted to kiss her, she grew very pale, and looked at him as though he had lost his senses. Then he would rage, and threaten her with the cowhide whip. But she had learned to smile in a way that tamed him and robbed him of inner assurance.

For six weeks Friedrich Pestel had now been in Buenos Ayres. She corresponded with him secretly. The Indian boy who had once accompanied her to the observatory was her faithful and discreet messenger. She promised to take him along to Europe, for this was his great wish. Eleutheria desired the same, and swore eternal devotion when Letitia carefully and gradually gave her her confidence. All details of the flight were discussed with Friedrich Pestel. Letitia was to be in Buenos Ayres on the day of the sailing of the Portuguese steamer *Dom Pedro*. An intricate intrigue was needed to convey the twins to the city. Letitia thought out a clever plan; it was like the plot of a detective novel.

There lived in the capital city an aged and childless couple, Señor and Señora Herzales. The old man was a brother of Doña Barbara, and his wealth would, upon his death, fall to the Gunderam children. But since both he and his wife

were misers of the filthiest kind, there was always the fear lest by some whim or in some rage they should make a will to the disadvantage of their kinsmen. They had not written to the Gunderams in years. There were no personal contacts except visits of state, which Stephen and his brothers occasionally paid them. Letitia was, of course, aware of all this. She forged a letter, supposedly from Señora Herzales, in which the old woman expressed the desire to see the young wife of Stephen and her children, and, in order that the uncle and aunt might get the better acquainted with her, the letter demanded that Letitia come alone, although there was no objection to Stephen's coming to fetch her home at the end of a week.

This letter, cleverly written by Letitia in a handwriting unlike her own, arrived with the proper postmark from Buenos Ayres and caused a great stir in the Gunderam clan. A solemn family council was held; greed and fear conquered all hesitation. Doña Barbara dictated to Letitia a humble and grateful letter of acceptance, in which she was permitted to announce her arrival on a day set by herself. This letter Letitia succeeded in intercepting.

On the fateful morning her heart beat like an alarm clock. The rickety coach drew up; Eleutheria got in; the slumbering twins were handed to her. Stephen examined the carriage, tested the harness, and graciously patted the horses. The Indian boy brought the hand luggage, stowed it away properly, and calmly mounted the box. Don Gottfried, Doña Barbara, Esmeralda and her brothers solemnly awaited Letitia. Five minutes passed, and ten and twenty, and still Letitia did not come. Stephen grumbled, Don Gottfried laughed a jeering laugh, Doña Barbara glanced furiously up at Letitia's windows. At last she appeared.

At the last moment she had mislaid the little bag that held her jewels. They were her one possession. She had no money at all.

With a radiant smile she gave her hand to each in turn, permitted her husband to kiss the tip of her chin, and cried out in a slightly husky and long-drawn-out and lamenting voice: "Don't forget me, and remember me to Father Theodore!" The latter was a Capuchin monk, who occasionally came to the farm to beg. It was a sheer, joyous whim that made her mention him at this moment.

The wintry sun disappeared in the fog. Letitia thought: "Where I am going now it is summer."

Twenty-four hours later she stood with Friedrich Pestel on the deck of the *Dom Pedro,* and looked back with happy eyes upon the disappearing shore.

XXVI

The driver roared, but it was too late. An edge of the rattling wagon laden with steel rails caught the limping boy and knocked him down. A crowd gathered, and a helmeted policeman made his way through it.

Christian had just turned the corner when he saw the boy lying there. He approached, and some women made room for him. As he bent over the boy, he saw that the latter had only been stunned; he was stirring and opened his eyes. Nor did he seem to be hurt. He peered anxiously about, and asked after the money that he had had in his hand before he had fallen. It had consisted of twenty or thirty nickel coins, which were now scattered in the mud.

Christian helped the boy get up, and wiped the spattered face with his white handkerchief. But to the boy the recovering of his money was of greater importance, although he could not bend over and could hardly stand. "Have patience until the wagon is gone," Christian said to him, and motioned the driver to proceed. The latter had become involved in a violent altercation with the policeman. But when the policeman saw that no great damage had been done, he also told the driver

to go ahead, and merely took down the man's name as well as the boy's. The boy was Michael Hofmann, Ruth's brother.

Christian bent over, and gathered the coins out of the mire. The spectators were amazed that a well-dressed gentleman should bend over in the street to gather nickel coins. Some recognized him. They said: "He's the one that lives back there with Gisevius."

Now at last Ruth came hurrying. She had been frightened from her post by Niels Heinrich Engelschall. She had waited on the stairs until he had disappeared. Then she had come down and heard the hubbub in the street, and had thought that it must be connected with the fellow who had stared at her with such savage impudence. She had hesitated again until a foreboding drove her forth.

She did not make much ado and hid her fright. She questioned her brother in a cheerful voice. Her German was very pure and perfect, and she spoke very swiftly, with a bird-like twitter in her throat.

When he had gathered the coins, Christian said: "Now let us count them to be sure that they are all here." Taking the boy by the arm, he led him across the street and into the house. Ruth had taken her brother's other arm, and thus they mounted the stairs. They entered a room which looked empty on account of its size, although it held two beds, a table, and a wardrobe. It was the only room of that dwelling. A kitchen adjoined it.

Michael sat down on the bed, still slightly stunned by his fall. He was about fourteen, but his tense features and his passionate eyes had a maturity far beyond his years.

Christian laid the coins on the table. They made no sound, so encrusted were they with mud. Ruth looked at Christian, shook her head compassionately, and hurried into the kitchen for a wet cloth with which to clean his spattered garments. She kneeled down before him. He drew back, but she did not perceive his motive and followed him on her knees.

So he resisted no longer, and felt a little foolish as she eagerly and skilfully brushed his trousers.

Suddenly she raised her face to him. His glance had been resting on the table, which was covered with many books. "Are those your books?" he asked.

She answered: "To be sure they are." And she looked at him with eyes that were astonishingly bright with a frank spiritual recognition of their inner kinship. The old arrogant expression with which he had been wont to shield his soul melted from his face. But even as it did he became aware of something that made him angry with himself, that seemed unnatural and absurd to him, and filled him with the fear of something evil and ghastly in his own eyes. For it seemed to him that he had seen a bloody mark on the girl's forehead.

In his fright he turned his eyes away, and resisted the impulse to look again. But when he had regained his self-control and looked upon her, there was nothing to be seen. He sighed with relief, but frowned angrily at himself.

XXVII

When the *Dom Pedro* had been on the high seas not more than a week, Letitia was forced to the sorrowful conclusion that Friedrich Pestel was not the right man for her.

She desired a man of imaginative ardour and impassioned soul. In face of the unending sea and the starry vault of heaven, a fadeless yearning had reawakened in her, and she told Pestel frankly and honestly that she could not be happy with him. Pestel was overwhelmed with amazement. He did not answer, and became melancholy.

Among the passengers there was an Austrian engineer who had been building railroads in Peru and was on his way home. His boldly romantic appearance and happy faculty of anecdote delighted Letitia. She could not let him perceive it on account of the other passengers who took her to be Pestel's wife. But

the engineer, who was something of an adventurer and courageous, had his own thoughts.

In spite of his genuine pain and disappointment, Pestel reproached himself for having bought the expensive first-cabin tickets for Letitia, the nurse, and the twins, and a second-cabin passage for the Indian boy, out of his own pocket. In addition he had, just before their departure and in all haste, bought several frocks and some linen for the woman whom he had saved from captivity, and to whom, as he thought, he was about to be united for life.

The Indian boy was sea-sick and also home-sick, and Letitia promised to send him back to the Argentine from Genoa.

Among the other passengers who regarded Letitia with a vivid eye was an American journalist who had spent several months in Brazil. He was witty, wrote clever verses, organized parties and dances, and soon seemed as charming to Letitia as the Austrian engineer. Between these two little skirmishes of jealousy took place, and each felt the other to be an obstacle.

One night they were the last guests at the bar; neither wanted to turn in, and they agreed to throw dice for a bottle of claret.

The Austrian lost.

The bottle arrived. The American filled the glasses; they drank, leaned back and smoked, looked searchingly at each other from time to time, and said nothing.

Suddenly the Yankee, still holding his pipe between his teeth, said: "Nice woman."

"Charming," the Austrian agreed.

"Has a strong sense of humour for a German."

The engineer thoughtfully blew rings of smoke. "She is altogether delightful," he said.

They fell silent again. Then the American said: "Isn't it rather absurd of us to spoil each other's chances? Let us throw dice, and abide by that!"

"Very well, let us do so," the engineer agreed. He took

the dice-box, shook it, and emptied it. The little cubes rattled down on the marble. "Eighteen," the engineer announced, astonished at his own good fortune.

The other gathered up the dice, also shook the box, let the dice glide on the table-top, and calmly announced "Eighteen!" He was equally unable—with more reason of course—to hide his astonishment.

The two men felt rather helpless. They were careful not to repeat their question to fate. They finished their wine, and separated with all due courtesy.

Letitia lay abed with wide-open eyes and listened to the throb of the engines, the soft crashing of the walls of the ship, and the humming of Eleutheria, who was soothing the twins in the adjoining stateroom. She thought of Genoa, the fast approaching goal of her voyage; and her imagination showed her gorgeously clad grandees and romantic conspirators in the style of Fiesco of Genoa, and torch-lit alleys and adventures of love and passion. Life seemed to her aglow with colour, and the future a gate of gold.

XXVIII

The child had disappeared.

Christian asked after its whereabouts. Karen shrugged her shoulders stubbornly. So Christian went to the dwelling of the widow Engelschall, who informed him with harsh brevity: "I put the child in good hands. You've got no right to worry. Why do you? It ain't yours!"

Christian said: "You have no reason not to tell me where it is."

The woman answered insolently: "Not on yer life! I ain't got no call to do it. The kid's well off where he is, and you ain't going to refuse to pay a bit to his foster-mother, are you? It's your dooty, and you can't get out of it."

Silently Christian regarded the fat moon-like face on its

triple chin, from which the voice rumbled like that of an old salt. Then he became aware of the fact that that sweaty mass of flesh was contorting itself to an expression of friendliness. Pointing to the glass door, which separated the hexagonal room in which they were from the other rooms, she asked in sweetish High German whether he wouldn't come in and partake of a little coffee. Coffee and fine pastry, she said, who would refuse that? She explained that she was expecting a baroness, who was coming from Küstrin especially to see her in order to get advice on important family matters. He could see that she wasn't born yesterday either, had nice friends of her own, and knew how to treat people of rank. Again she asked him to stay.

In this dim room there were several tables covered with well-thumbed copies of periodicals and comic papers. It looked like a dentist's reception room. The woman's fat fingers were covered with rings that had brightly coloured stones. She wore a bodice of red silk and a black skirt, the girdle of which was held by a silver buckle as massive as a door knob.

When Christian came in to see Karen that evening, she sat by the oven resting her head on her hand. Christian had brought her some oranges, and he laid the fruit on her lap. She did not stir; she did not thank him. He thought that perhaps she was longing for her child, and did not break her long silence.

Suddenly she said: "It's seven years ago to-day that Adam Larsen died."

"I have never heard of Adam Larsen," Christian said. Since she made no remark, he repeated: "I've never heard of Adam Larsen. Won't you tell me about him?"

She shook her head. She seemed to crouch as for a leap at the wall under his look. Christian carried a chair close up to Karen. He sat down beside her, and urged her to speak: "What about Adam Larsen?"

She took in a deep breath. "It was the only good time

in my life, the time I had with him, the only beautiful time—five months and a half."

She delved deep, deep into her consciousness. Things there yearned for the light. "It was the time I was expecting my second child," she said. "We were on the way from Memel to Königsberg, myself and Mathilde Sorge and her intended. Oh, well, intended is what they call it. On the way I noticed that I was going to get into a mess pretty soon. They advised me to leave the train. One station before we got to Königsberg I did get out. Mathilde stayed with me, though she scolded; her intended went on to the city. It was a March evening, cold and wet. There was an inn near the station where they knew Mathilde. She thought we could get lodging there, and there was no time to lose; but they were having a fair in that place, and every room was taken. We begged for a garret or anything; but the innkeeper looked at me, and saw what was the matter. I was leaning against the wall and shaking. He roared, and told us to go to the devil; he didn't want to have anything to do with such things. I lay down on a low wagon in the yard. I couldn't have gone on, not if they'd set the dogs on me. The farmer that owned the wagon came, and he wasn't pleased; but Mathilde, she talked to him a while, and so he drove on slowly toward the city. Mathilde walked beside the wagon. I felt I don't know how; I thought if I could just be dead—quite dead! The wheels bumped on the stones, and I screamed and shrieked. The farmer said he'd had enough of that. We were in the suburbs by this time, so they tugged me out of the wagon, and held me up. There was a young man who had seen us, and he helped too. The rain fell by the bucket, and I was clean done for. I asked them for God's sake to get me in anywhere, if it was only a hole or a cellar. At the corner there was a cheap music-hall for working people. They dragged me through the door into a little room, and pushed two benches together, and laid me on them. The room was full of the gay dresses of the lady per-

formers; on one side of the room was the bar, on the other side the auditorium. You could hear the music and the applause and the roars of laughter. Some women, got up in dirty silks and spangles, came in and stood around me, and quarrelled and screamed for one thing or another. Well, there's no use going on with that part. The child was born there, and it was dead. They'd sent for a policeman and for a doctor too; but it was the young man we had met on the street who was really kind and wouldn't leave me in my trouble. And that was Adam Larsen."

"And he continued to help you? And you stayed with him?" Christian asked tensely.

Karen went on: "He was a painter, a real one, an artist. His home was in Jutland; he was lean and very fair. In those days my hair was just the colour of his. He had an aunt living in Königsberg, and he was glad to stay with her a while, because he was hard up. But when I was lying in the charity home to which they'd removed me, he got the news from Copenhagen that he'd been given a stipend by the state of two thousand talers for two years. He asked me if I wouldn't like to go with him. He meant to go to Belgium to a famous painter who was living somewhere on the French frontier. He wanted to study with him, like others who were already there. Well, he said he was fond of me, and I said that was all very nice, and asked him if he knew the sort of woman I was. He said he didn't want to know anything, and all I'd have to do was to have confidence in him. So I thought to myself, 'Here's one that's got a heart,' and I grew to be fond of him too. I'd never cared for any man yet; he was the first, and he was the last too. And so I went away with him. The great painter lived in a French village, and we moved to a little town called Wassigny not far from there. Larsen rented a little house. Every morning he'd ride over to the village on his bicycle; if the weather was bad he walked. It was half an hour's walk. In the evening he'd come back, and

we'd have a nice little dinner and tea and chat. And he'd get real enthusiastic, and tell me how he loved painting here—the trees and the fields and the peasants and the miners and the river and the sky, and I don't know what all. I didn't understand that, of course; but what I understood was that I felt as I'd never felt before in life. I couldn't believe it when I woke up in the morning; I couldn't believe it when the neighbours smiled at me. Near the village there was a pool with water lilies, and I used to go often and often and look at it. I'd never seen anything like that before, and I couldn't rightly believe in it. I knew that couldn't last; it wasn't possible that it could last long. And sure enough, in August, Adam took to his bed one day. He had a fever, and it got worse and worse; and in six days he was dead. That was the end of everything. That was the end of everything."

Her hands kept clutching her hair, and for the third time she said: "That was the end of everything."

"And then?" Christian whispered.

She looked at him, and every muscle in her face quivered: "Then? Oh, the things that happened then . . . then . . .!"

"Couldn't you somehow find a way of life without . . . without . . ." Christian stammered, frightened by the blind, white rage in her face. She clenched her fists and cried so loud that her words re-echoed from the walls: "Oh, then! The things that happened then!"

Her whole body quivered. "Don't touch me," she said with a nervous start.

Christian had not touched her at all.

"Go on now," she said. "I'm tired. I've got to sleep." She got up.

He stood at one door, Karen at the opposite one. She lowered her head, and said in a toneless voice: "It's crazy—me talking to you this way—so familiar and all." And her face showed both hatred and fear.

When she was alone beside her bed, she lost herself in the contemplation of the picture of the woman with the pearls. Once she turned around, and looked wildly into the other room, to the spot where Christian had stood.

And Christian could not forget her words and the way she had said: "Oh, then . . ."

XXIX

Weikhardt had been working at his Descent from the Cross for two years, yet he could not finish the picture. No effort, no absorption, no lonely contemplation, no spiritual seeking would bring him the expression on the face of Christ.

He could not create that expression—the compassion and the pain.

He had scratched the face from the canvas a hundred times; he had tried many models; he had spent hours and days studying the old masters; he had made hundreds and hundreds of sketches; he had tried and tried. It was all in vain; he could not create it.

In the spring he had married Helen Falkenhaus, the girl of whom he had once spoken to Imhof. Their married life was a quiet one. Their means were small, and they had to be content with very little. Helen bore every privation with great sweetness. Her piety, which often had a touch of expectant passion, helped her to ease her husband of the consciousness of his burdens and responsibilities.

She had an understanding of art, a high and fine perception of its qualities. He showed her his sketches, and she thought many of them very beautiful. At times he seemed to her to have come near the vision of which she too had a glimpse; but she was forced to admit that he never quite embodied it. He attained compassion and pain, but not the compassion and the pain of Christ.

Just then there arrived in Munich the Polish countess for

whom he had copied the cycle of Luini. One evening she gave an entertainment to which Weikhardt was invited, and among the crowd he caught sight of Sybil Scharnitzer. He had seen her years ago in the studio of a fashionable painter. She had been surrounded by admirers and flatterers, and he had carried away only a general impression of her beauty.

This time she inspired him with a strange and magical excitement He knew at once that he needed her, that between her and his work there was some mystic bond. He approached her and held her by his vivid eloquence. Carefully he revealed his purpose. Absorbing her mien, her gesture, that look of hers that went to the very soul, he saw clearly what he expected of her and what she could give him. In this eye, when it was wide open, he saw that more than mortal look which had hitherto been but dim in his mind. He begged her to sit for him. She thought a little and consented.

She came. He asked her to bare her neck and shoulders, and to swathe her bust in a black shawl of Venetian lace. He stood at his easel, and for ten minutes he gazed at her steadily. Scarcely did his lids stir. Then he took a piece of charcoal, and drew the outlines of the head of Christ. Sybil was astonished. At the end of an hour he thanked her, and that was the first time he had spoken. He begged her to come again. Quite as amazed as she had been at first, she pointed at the canvas. But he smiled secretively, told her that his technical approach was a roundabout one, and asked her to have patience.

When she left, Helen came in. He had told her of his plan, and his confidence had prevailed over her doubts. She knew the history of Sybil Scharnitzer, and had observed her that evening at the countess's with the cold scrutiny which one woman gives another. She looked at the charcoal sketch, and was silent for many minutes. At last, under his questioning look, casting down her own eyes, she asked: "Did any model ever appear so disguised?"

Weikhardt had recovered his usual, phlegmatic temper. "Very few people will understand my excursion behind the scenes—painters least of all. I can see them crossing themselves and making venomous comments."

"That doesn't matter," said Helen. "But what do you mean by an excursion behind the scenes?"

"I mean the scenes set by God."

Helen thought this over, but his words hurt her. She said: "I could understand that perfectly if Sybil's face were genuine; but you yourself have told me who and what she is. You know that it is a beautiful screen, with emptiness behind it. And in this vain deception you think you will find what is deepest in the world—the Saviour, your vision of the Saviour? Isn't it as though you had delivered yourself into the power of falseness itself?"

"No," Weikhardt answered, "it is not. You don't see far enough. Things cohere together far more closely than you think. One body, one element, one stream—each is more interwoven with all things than you realize. The soulless emptiness in Sybil Scharnitzer's breast is the reflection of some light, and to me personally it is a concrete thing. If a form deceives me, I am still grateful to it, for it forces me to create its content from within myself; and the creative dream is the greater thing. Can a blade of grass be a lie? Or a shell by the shore? And if I were strong enough and guiltless enough and devout enough, it would be given me to find in every blade and shell the compassion and the pain of Christ. There is an element of chance in these things, or else some dispensation."

Helen did not contradict him.

XXX

That word of Karen's, that desperate "then!" gave Christian no rest.

He had worked hard all day. He had not left the Physiological Institute until seven o'clock. Then he had eaten a frugal evening meal, and had gone home on foot. Thoroughly tired, he had thrown himself on the sofa, and fallen asleep.

When he woke up it was dark night. The house was quite silent. He lit a light, and looked at his watch; it pointed to half-past eleven. He considered for a little, and then determined to go across the courtyard to see Karen. He was sure to find her awake; sometimes she kept her lamp burning until two o'clock. For some time she had been doing embroidery work; she said she wanted to earn some money. So far she had not succeeded, but she had taken no great pains to sell her work.

He crossed the dark court, and mounted the dark stairs. He stopped at the open hall window of the third floor. The night was sultry. On one side, through a canyon between the black and lifeless brick walls of two houses, he saw smoke stacks project into the darkness. They came from the earth itself and overtopped the roofs. They were tipped with lightning-rods, and from some of them came thick fumes shot with the quiver of flames. Below was blackness, empty land hedged in by wooden fences, rough beams piled in heaps, low isolated huts, sand-pits and mortar-pits, and darkness and silence over all.

To the left of the stairs was the door to the Hofmanns' flat. When he was letting himself into Karen's rooms, he still gazed back at that door. He thought he was being called thither, but it was a delusion.

Karen was in bed. "Why, what do you want so late?" she grumbled. "I'd like a little quiet sometime."

"I beg your pardon," he said courteously. "I didn't mean to disturb you. I thought we might chat for a little while."

"I'd like to know the good of all this talking, day and night." She was annoyed, and even her laugh showed it.

He sat down on the edge of the bed. "You must tell me

what happened to you after Adam Larsen's death," he said. "I can't get rid of the impression of your words: the things that happened then . . . Of course, I can imagine in a general way. I have insight enough into life now to make a guess . . ."

She interrupted him with a note of contempt in her voice. "No, you can't guess nothing and you can't imagine nothing. I'd bet my last rag on that."

"That's all the more reason why I'd like you to tell me about it," he urged her. "You have never done so."

There was an hostility in her silence, and it suddenly became clear to him that some stubborn instinct in her refused to initiate him wholly into her world. All that he had done for her had not sufficed to conquer the distrust of him and his kind that was bred into her very bone. The realization of this fact made him feel sad and helpless.

"I went to bed at seven to-day," she said, blinking her eyes. "I wasn't feeling a bit well. I believe I'm going to be sick."

Christian looked at her, and he could not keep the disquietude and urgency out of his eyes.

Karen closed her lids. "Nothing but torment, torment, torment," she moaned.

Christian was frightened. "No, no. Forgive me. I'll go."

"You might as well stay." She laid her cheek on her folded hands, and drew up her limbs under the covers. A common but not disagreeable odour came from her hair and skin.

Wearily and idly she talked into the pillow. "It's the common, ordinary thing, always the same. Women that tell you something else are liars. Of course, a good many will invent long romances to seem interesting, but I can't do that. What do I care about it? No, it's always the same story, common and horrible and filthy from A to Z. Oh, yes, you might as well stay now and sit down. I'll tell you what I can. If you've just got to know, I might as well tell you, but it's hard.

I don't know where to begin. There is no beginning. There's nothing definite,—no romance nor nothing."

Christian sat down again. "When Adam Larsen died," he said, "was there no path for you? Was there no one among his friends or relatives who paid any attention to you or helped you?"

She laughed a sarcastic laugh. "Hell! You're all off there. His friends didn't hardly know about me. His brother came to the funeral, but I didn't dare so much as speak to him. He was one of the righteous kind, with a golden watch-chain and a tip of five sous for the servants. And I was in a strange country, and didn't know the language, and had to see about getting away. I had thirty francs in cash, and the question was: where could I go? I tried to get work once or twice. But what sort of work was I to do? I hadn't learned nothing. Was I to go as a servant, and black boots and scrub floors? No, thank you! I was used to something different now, and I thought I could get along somehow. Anyhow I didn't give a damn what became of me; I didn't matter so much. In Aachen I took a job as a waitress. Nice occupation! I can't give you an idea of that—the tiredness in your legs, the abuse you got to take! For food they give you the scraps; the bed ain't fit for a dog. What they expect of you makes you crazy mad.

"Well, when you live that way you're open to all sorts of swindling talk. I went into a house; stayed there four months, and then went into another. I had debts, too. Suddenly you're in debt, you can't figure out why. Board and lodging and clothes—they charge you three times over for everything: you got to pay for the air you breathe. All you think of is how to get out, or something awful will happen. Well, then maybe some fellow comes along in high feather, throws money out of the windows, pays for you, and gets you out. You go with him, and on the third morning somebody knocks at the door. Who's there? Police! Your man's a thief, and you

have the devil's own time clearing yourself of complicity. What now? You have to have a roof and a bed, and some one to talk to; you want a warm bite and a cool drink. You've got the mark of the trade on you, and no one trusts you. You're shoved and you're pulled, and you go down and down, day by day, step by step. You hardly notice it, and suddenly you're at the bottom."

She curled herself up more compactly under the covers, and continued in a blunter tone. "It's easy to say that—at the bottom; but really there's no such thing. There's a lower depth under every depth; and there ain't no words to tell you how it is down there. No one can imagine it who hasn't been there. No seeing from the outside and no knowing will make people realize it. You live in a place for which they charge you five times as much as is fair and decent. You're common property, and everybody gets out of you all he can. You don't care if the place is elegant or like a pigsty. It gives you the horrors to open the door of it. It ain't yours; it's everybody's. It's the place where everybody sort of sheds his filth, and you know them all and remember them all. It does you no good to go to bed and try to sleep. Another day is bound to come. There are the same greasy public houses and the same faces, always the same crowd. And then there's the street—what you call your territory. That's where you go by night. You know every window and crossing and lantern: you stare and turn and ogle and grin, and open your umbrella if it rains, and walk and stand around and keep a sharp eye on the police, and make up to any man if he's got torn shoes or sports a fur ulster. And then you promise him God knows what; and all the time you'd like to scratch his heart out if he walks off, or spit in his face if he condescends to you. There it is! That's the main thing. Pain and worry —Lord, all people have them. But what you get to find out about men there—oh, I tell you!"

Her last words were a cry again, a great cry, such as that

other cry which Christian had not been able to forget. He sat very straight, and looked past the lamp to a certain spot on the wall.

Karen seemed, as she went on, to be addressing the floor. "Then there's the lodging-house keeper, who steals and cheats. There's the owner of the house, who acts by daylight as if he wanted to kick you, and comes slinking to your door at twilight. There's the shop-keeper, who overcharges you, and acts as if he was doing you a favour by giving you rotten stuff for your good money. There's the policeman that grudges you every step you take. If you don't slip him a bribe, he pulls you in and you go to jail. There's the innkeeper; maybe you owe him a bit. He torments you if you got no brass, and wheedles and flatters when you have a little. I don't mention your own man; but you got to have one if you want to or not, otherwise you've got no protection. When he's sent to the penitentiary, you got to get another. They're all handy with their knives, but Mesecke was the worst of the lot. But I tell you what's hell—hell like nothing else in the whole, wide world—that's your business and your customers. It don't matter if they're elegant or common, young or old, skinflints or spendthrifts—when they get to you they're no better than carrion on a dung-heap. There you see what hypocrisy is and rascality; there you see the dirty souls as they are, with their terror and their lies and their lusts. Everything comes out. It comes out, I tell you, because they ain't ashamed to let it. They don't have to be. You get to see human beings without shame, and what you see is the miserable, hideous flesh. Would you like to know how it is? Drink of a cess-pool and you'll know! It don't matter if it's a man that beats his wife when she's with child, or lets his children starve, or a student or an officer that's gone to the dogs, or a frightened parson, or a merchant with a huge belly—it's the same, the same—man without shame and the hideous flesh."

She laughed with tormented scorn, and went on: "I met

Mesecke when I was discharged from the hospital. I had no one then. Before that I'd been in jail three weeks on account of a scamp named Max. He was bad enough, but he was a sweet innocent compared to Mesecke. A young man happened to turn up in the café, a college student or something like that. He treated us to one bottle of champagne after another, day in and day out. You knew right away that there was something rotten about it. And he always wanted me, just me, and he made the money fly. So one day Mesecke took him aside, and said to him right out: 'That money comes out of your father's safe. You stole it.' The boy owned right up, and his knees just shook. So Mesecke got his claws into him, and showed him how to get more. And he and a skunk named Woldemar promised to take him to an opium den that was, they told him, just like heaven on earth. That night, when the boy was with me, he began to cry and whine like everything. I felt sorry for him, 'cause I knew he'd come to a bad end; and I told him so, and told him straight and rough. Then he emptied his pockets, and I'd never seen that much money in my life; and it was all stolen money. I got kind of dizzy, and told him to take it and put it back; but he wanted me to have it and buy myself something for it. I trembled all over, and told him for God's sake to take it home; but he cried and fell on his knees and hugged me, and suddenly Mesecke was in the room. He'd been hidden and heard everything, and I hadn't had an idea. But the boy's face turned as grey as a piece of pumice stone; he looked at me and at Mesecke, and of course he thought it was a plot. I was glad when Mesecke crashed his fist into my temple, so that the air seemed to be full of fire and blood, and then kicked me into a corner. That must have made the boy see I was innocent. Then Mesecke took hold of Adalbert—that was his name—and went off with him. Adalbert said nothing, and just followed. He didn't turn up the next day nor the next nor the day after that, so I asked Mesecke: 'What did

you do to Adalbert?' And he said: 'I put him on board a ship that was going overseas.' Yes, I thought to myself, that's a likely story. So I asked him again; and this time he said if I didn't hold my tongue he'd scatter my bones for me. Well, I kept still. Maybe Adalbert did take passage on a ship; it's possible. We didn't ever hear no more about him. And I didn't care so much, for there was something else every day. I had to be careful of my own skin, and get through the night somehow, and through the day. And it was always the same, always the same."

She sat up, and took hold of Christian's arm with an iron grip. Her eyes sparkled, and she hissed out through clenched teeth: "But I didn't really know it. When you're in the thick of it you don't know. You don't feel that it's no life for a human being; and you don't want to see, and you don't dare to know that you're damned and in a burning hell! Why did you take me out of it? Why did things have to happen this way?"

Christian did not answer. He heard the air roar past his ears.

After a while she let his arm go, or, rather, she thrust it from her, and he arose. She flung herself back on her pillows. Christian thought: "It has been in vain." The dread that he had felt turned to despair. In vain! He heard the words in the air about him: "In vain, in vain, in vain!"

Then, in a clear voice that he had never heard her use before, Karen said: "I'd like to have your mother's rope of pearls."

"What?" Christian said. It seemed to him that he must have misunderstood her.

And in the same, almost childlike voice, Karen repeated: "Your mother's pearls—that's what I'd like." She was talking nonsense, and she knew it. Not for a moment did she think it conceivable that her desire could be fulfilled.

Christian approached the bed. "What made you think of

that? " he whispered. " What do you mean by that? What? "

" I've never wished for anything so much," Karen said in the same clear voice. She was lying very still now. " Never, never. At least, I'd love to see them once—see how things like that look. I'd like to hold them, touch them, just once. They don't seem real. Go to her and ask for them. Go and say: ' Karen wants so much to see your pearls.' Maybe she'll lend them to you." She laughed half madly. " Maybe she'd let you have them for a while. It seems to me that then "—she opened her eyes wide, and there was a new flame in them—" that then things might be different between us."

" Who told you of them? " Christian asked as though in a dream. " Who spoke to you of my mother's pearls? "

She opened the drawer of the little table beside her bed, and took out the photograph. Christian reached out for it eagerly, although she was going to give it to him. " Voss gave it to me," she said.

Christian looked at the picture and quietly put it away.

" Yes, that's what I'd like," Karen said again; and there was a wildness in her face, and a childlikeness and a pathos and a greed, and a certain defiance which was also like a child's. And her smile was wild, and her laughter. " Oh, there's nothing else I'd want then. I would taste the pearls with my tongue and bury them in my flesh; and I'd let no one know and show them to no one. Yes, that's what I want, only that—your mother's pearls, even if it's for just a little while."

Nothing could so have pierced the soul of Christian as this wild stammering and this wild begging. He stood by the window, gazing into the night, and said slowly and reflectively: " Very well, you shall have them."

Karen did not answer. She stretched herself out and closed her eyes. She didn't take his words seriously. When he left her, there was a silent mockery in her mind—of him, of herself.

But the next morning Christian took the underground railway to the Anhalter Station, and bought a third-class ticket to Frankfort. In his hand he carried a small travelling bag.

XXXI

"Come on then, let's see what you know!" Niels Heinrich said to his mother, the fortune-teller Engelschall.

They were in her inner sanctum. Attached to the ceiling by a black cord hung a stuffed bat with outstretched wings. Dark, glowing glass-beads had been set in its head. On the table, which was covered with cards, lay a death's head.

It was Sunday night, and Niels Heinrich came from his favourite pub. He only stopped here on his way to a suburban dancing-hall. He wore a black suit and a blue and white linen waistcoat. He had pushed his derby hat so far to the back of his head that one saw the whole parting of his hair. In his left arm-pit he held a thin, little stick. He see-sawed on the chair on which he had slouched himself down.

"Come on now, trot out your tricks," and he flung a five-mark piece on the table. In his dissipated eyes there was a shimmer as of some mineral and an indeterminate lustfulness.

The widow Engelschall was always afraid of him. She shuffled her cards. "You seem to be well fixed, my lad," she fawned on him. "That's right. Cut! And now let's see what you let yourself in for."

Niels Heinrich see-sawed on his chair. For many days his throat had been on fire. He was sick of his very teeth and hands. He wanted to grasp something, and hold it and crush it in his fist—something smooth and warm, something that had life and begged for life. He hated all things else, all hours, all ways.

"A ten and a ace o' diamonds," he heard his mother say, "the king o' clubs and the jack o' spades—that don't mean

nothing good. Then another ten and a grey woman "—consternation was on her face—"you ain't going to do nothing awful, boy?"

"Aw, don't get crazy, ol' woman," Niels Heinrich snarled at her. "You'd make a dog laugh." He frowned, and said with assumed indifference, "Look and see if the cards say something about a Jew wench."

The widow Engelschall shook her head in astonishment. "No, my boy, nothing like that." She turned the cards again. "No. Another ten and a queen o' hearts—that might mean a money order. Lord love us—three more queens. You always was a great one for the women. And that reminds me that red Hetty asked after you to-day. She wanted to know if you'd come to the Pit to-night.

Niels Heinrich answered: "Gee, I just kicked her out a day or two ago. Her memory must be frozen. Gee!" He leaned back and see-sawed again. "Aw, well, if you can't tell me nothing pleasant, I'll take back my fiver."

"It's coming, my boy, it's coming," the old woman said soothingly. She shuffled the cards again. "Have patience. We'll get that business with the Jew wench yet."

Niels Heinrich stared into emptiness. Wherever he looked he had seen the same thing for days and days—a young, smooth neck, two young, smooth shoulders, two young, smooth breasts; and all these were strange, of a strange race, and filled with a strange sweet blood. And he felt that if he could not grasp these, grasp them and smell and taste, he would die the death of a dog. He got up and forced himself to a careless gesture. "You can stop," he said. "It's all a damn' swindle. You can keep the tip too. I don't give a damn." He passed his stick across the cards, jumbled them together, and went out.

The widow Engelschall, left alone, shook her head. The ambition of her calling stirred in her. She shuffled and laid down the cards anew. "We'll get it yet," she murmured, "we'll get it yet . . ."

RUTH AND JOHANNA

I

It was in the Hotel Fratazza in San Martino di Castrozza that, at the end of years, Crammon and the Countess Brainitz met again.

The countess sat on the balcony of her room, embroidering a Slavonic peasant scarf, and searching with her satisfied eyes the craggy mountains and the wooded slopes and paths. As she did so, a dust-covered motor car stopped at the entrance below, and from it stepped two ladies and two gentlemen in the fashionable swathings of motoring. The gentlemen took off their goggles, and made arrangements with the manager of the hotel.

"Look down, Stöhr," the countess turned to her companion. "Look at that stoutish man with a face like an actor. He seems familiar to——" At that moment Crammon looked up and bowed. The countess uttered a little cry.

That evening, in the dining-hall, Crammon could not avoid going to the countess' table and asking after her health, the length of her stay here, and similar matters. The countess rudely interrupted his courteous phrases. "Herr von Crammon, there's something I have to say to you privately. I'm glad to have this opportunity. I have been waiting for it very long."

"I am entirely at your service, countess," said Crammon, with ill-concealed vexation. "I shall take the liberty of calling on you to-morrow at eleven."

At ten minutes past eleven on the next day he had himself announced. In spite of the energetic way in which she had demanded this interview, he felt neither curiosity nor anxiety.

The countess pointed to a chair, sat down opposite her guest, and assumed the expression of a judge. "My dear sister, whom you, Herr von Crammon, cannot fail to remember, passed from this world to a better one after a long illness eighteen months ago. I was permitted to be with her to the end, and in her last hours she made a confession to me."

The sympathy which Crammon exhibited was of such obvious superficiality that the countess added with knife-like sharpness of tone: "It was my sister Else, Herr von Crammon, the mother of Letitia. Haven't you anything to say?"

Crammon nodded dreamily. "So she too is gone," he sighed, "dear woman! And all that was twenty years ago! It was a glorious time, countess. Youth, youth—ah, all the meaning in that word! Don't remind me, dear countess, don't remind me!

> "'Even the beautiful dies, though it conquer men and immortals,
> Zeus of the iron breast feels no compassion within.'"

"Spare me your poetical quotations," the countess replied angrily. "You shan't get the better of me as you did once upon a time. In those days the mask of discretion was the most convenient and comfortable for you to assume; and I don't deny that you assumed it with the utmost skill. But let me add this at once: One may be as discreet as a mummy, yet there are situations in life in which one is forced to follow the call of one's heart, that is, if one is provided with such a thing. A momentary hoarseness, a quiver of the lips, a moisture of the eye—that would have sufficed. I observed nothing of the kind in you. Instead you stood by quite calmly, while that poor girl, your daughter, your own flesh and blood, was sold to a filthy maniac, a tiger in human form."

Crammon's answer was temperate and dignified. "Perhaps you will have the kindness, dear countess, to recall my sincere and insistent warning. I came to you late at night, tormented

by conscience, and made the most weighty and solemn representations to you."

"Warning! Fudge! You told me wild stories. You cheated me right and left."

"Those are strong expressions, countess."

"I mean them to be!"

"Too bad! Ah, well! The dewy moisture of the eye, countess, is the sort of thing you mustn't expect of me; I haven't the required gift. I found the little girl sympathetic, very sympathetic, but merely as a human being. You mustn't expect paternal emotions of me. Frankly and honestly, countess, I consider those emotions vastly overestimated by sentimental people. A mother—ah, there the voice of nature speaks. But a father is a more or less unlucky accident. Suppose you had planned to overwhelm me with an effective scene. Let us picture it. Yonder door opens, and there appears a young gentleman or a young lady armed with all necessary documents or proofs. Such proper documents and proofs could be gathered against any normal man of forty-three like the sands of the sea. And so this young man or young lady approaches me with the claims of a son or a daughter. Well, do you really believe that I would be deeply moved, and that the feelings of a father would gush from my heart like waters from a fountain? On the contrary, I would say: 'My dear young man, or my dear young lady, I am charmed to make your acquaintance,' but that exhausts the entire present possibilities of the situation. And wouldn't it, by the way, be most damnably uncomfortable, if one had to live in the constant expectation of meeting one's unpaid bills of twenty years ago in human form? Where would that lead to? The offspring in question, whether male or female, if possessed of any tact, would thoroughly consider such a step, and pause before using an ill-timed intrusion to burden a man who is busy stirring the dregs in the cup of life for some palatable remnants. The conception of our charming Letitia, my dear

lady, was woven into so peculiar a mesh of circumstance, and so evidently due to the interposition of higher powers, that my own service in the matter shrinks into insignificance. When I met the dear girl, I had the feeling of a wanderer who once thoughtlessly buried a cherry kernel by the roadside. Years later he passes the same spot, and is surprised by a cherry tree. Delightful but quite natural. But do you expect the man to raise a cry of triumph? Is he to haunt the neighbourhood, and say: 'Look at my cherry-tree! Am I not a remarkable fellow?' Or would you expect him to go to the owner of the land and demand the tree and uproot it, or even steal it by night in order to transplant it he knows not where? Such a man would be a fool, countess, or a maniac."

"I didn't suspect you of having much spirituality, Herr von Crammon," the countess replied bitterly, "but I thought a little might be found. I confess that I'm dumbfounded. Pray tell me this: Do all men share your views, or are you unique in this respect? It would console me to believe the latter, for otherwise humanity would seem to cut too sorry a figure."

"God forbid, dearest countess, that I should be guilty of disturbing the admirable equilibrium of your mind and soul," Crammon returned eagerly. "God forbid! By all means consider me an exception. Most of the people I know are quite proud of their productions, whether the latter take the form of verse, or a new fashion in waistcoats, or a quite original way of preparing the livers of geese. They are insatiable for the fame of authorship. When you see them from afar, you feel yourself forced to invent compliments; and there is no lie that they do not swallow with a greed that makes you ashamed for them. And no chef, no poet, and no tailor is so puffed up with creative vanity as your common bourgeois progenitor. Compared to him the rhinoceros is a delicate and sensitive creature. My dislike of the institution of the family was heightened by an incident that illustrates my point. I once

asked a man, who was a notorious cuckold, how his two boys happened to be so extraordinarily fair, since both he and his wife were very dark. He replied with the utmost impudence that his ancestors had been Norman knights. Norman knights, of all things in the world! And the man was a Jew from Prague. Norman knights! "

The countess shook her head. "You're telling me anecdotes again," she said, "and I'm not fond of them, least of all of yours. So you repudiate all responsibility? You consider Letitia a stranger, and deny the darling child? Is that, in a word, the meaning of all your discourse? "

"Not at all, countess. I am ready for any amicable rapprochement; only I refuse to be nailed down, and have a sentimental moral responsibility foisted on me. Were that attempted, I should be apt to flee, although I am by nature calm and deliberate. But let us not waste the time discussing theories. Tell me the precise nature of little Letitia's misfortunes."

Mastering the horror with which Crammon filled her, the countess related how she had received a telegram from Genoa a month ago. The message had been: "Send money or come immediately." She had hastened to Genoa, and found the poor child in a pitiful condition. Letitia had so little money that she had to pawn her jewels to pay her hotel bills; she was tyrannized and cheated by the Argentinian nurse whom she had brought over; one of the twins had a touch of intestinal catarrh, the other of inflammation of the eyes——"

"Twins? Did you say twins? " Crammon interrupted her in consternation.

"Twins. Precisely what I said. You are the grandfather of twins." The countess's reply reeked with malicious satisfaction.

"The ways of Providence are indeed wonderful," Crammon murmured, and his eyes dulled a little, "grandfather of twins . . . Extraordinary, I confess. I must say that the affair

doesn't look humorous. Why did she leave her husband? Why didn't you stay with her? "

"You shall hear all. The man maltreated her—actually and physically. She fell into the hands of drunkards, robbers, poisoners, horse-thieves, forgers, and slanderers. She was a prisoner in the house; she suffered hunger; they tormented her body and soul, and made cruel threats; she was in fear of her life; they trained wild animals to terrorize her, and hired escaped convicts to watch her. Fear and horror brought her to the brink of the grave. It was unspeakable. Without the interposition and noble-hearted assistance of a German captain, who offered her passage to Europe, she would have perished miserably. Unhappily I could not even thank her unselfish friend; he had left Genoa when I arrived. But Letitia gave me his address, and I shall write him."

"It's all very regrettable," said Crammon, "and yet it is what I expected. I had a foreboding, and thence my prophecy. I thought this Stephen Gunderam odious from the start. He was like a cheap showman blowing a tin trumpet. I wouldn't have trusted him with an old umbrella, not to speak of a young girl whose exquisite qualities were patent to all the world. Nevertheless I disapprove of her flight. If the conditions were demonstrably insufferable, she should have sought her freedom through the appropriate legal methods. Marriage is a sacrament. First she jumps at it, as though it were a well-warranted seventh heaven. Next, having experienced the discomforts which a very imbecile would have expected under the circumstances, she takes French leave, and steams off to Europe with two helpless and unsheltered babes. That is neither consistent nor prudent, and I must distinctly withhold my approval."

The countess was indignant. "It's your opinion that the poor child should rather have let them torment her to death? "

"I beg your pardon. I merely point out her unfortunate

way of seeking redress; beyond that I do not presume to judge. I consider it a wrong step to break the union sanctified by the Church, and desert both hearth and country. It is a godless thing, and leads to destruction. And what happened while you were with her? What did she determine on? Where is she now?"

"In Paris."

"In Paris! Is that so? And the purpose of her visit?"

"She wants to recuperate. I don't grudge her the chance. She needs it."

"I don't question it, countess. But Paris seems an unusual place for such a purpose. And did she directly refuse the pleasure of your society, or do you merely fail to share her taste for recuperating in Paris?"

The countess was visibly embarrassed. She wrinkled her brow, and her little red cheeks glowed. "In the hotel she made the acquaintance of a Vicomte Seignan-Castreul, who was staying there with his sister," she said hesitantly. "They invited Letitia to be their guest in Paris and afterwards at their château in Brittany. The child wept, and said to me: 'Auntie, I'd love to go, but I can't because I haven't a cent.' It cut me to the heart, and I scraped together what I could—five thousand francs in all. The darling thanked me from the heart, and then left with the vicomte and vicomtesse, and promised to meet me in Baden-Baden in October."

"And where are the twins in the meanwhile?"

"She took them with her, of course—the twins, and their Argentinian nurse, an English maid, and her own maid."

"I honour your generosity, countess, but I don't somehow like either your vicomte or your vicomtesse."

The countess suddenly gave a loud sob. "I don't either!" she cried, and pressed her hands to her face. "I don't either. If only the dear child does not meet with new misfortunes! But what was I to do? Can one resist her pleading? I was

so happy to have her back; I felt as though she'd risen from the grave. No, the vicomte is not sympathetic to me at all. He has a dæmoniac character."

"People with dæmoniac characters are always swindlers, countess," Crammon said drily. "A decent man is never that. It's a swindle in itself, that word."

"Herr von Crammon," the countess announced with decision, "I expect of you now that you show character in the other and beautiful sense of the word, I expect you to come to Baden-Baden when Letitia has arrived, to interest yourself in her who is closer to you than any one else on earth, and to make up for your wrong and your neglect."

"For the love of all the saints, not that!" Crammon cried in terror. "Recognition, deep emotion, father and daughter fall into each other's arms, remorse and damp handkerchiefs! No! Anything you want, but not that."

"No excuses, Herr von Crammon, it is your duty!" The countess had arisen, and her eyes were majestic. Crammon writhed and begged and besought her. It did no good. The countess would not let him go until he had pledged her his word of honour to be in Baden-Baden by the end of October or, at latest, the beginning of November.

When the countess was alone, she walked up and down for a little, still hot and gasping. Then she called her companion. "Send me the waiter, Stöhr," she moaned, "I'm weak with hunger."

Fräulein Stöhr did as she was bidden.

II

Frau Wahnschaffe was on one of her rare outings. She was driving in her electric car toward Schwanheim, when she caught sight of a group of young men at the entrance to the polo-grounds. Among them was one who reminded her strongly of Christian. His slenderness and noble grace of gesture

gave her so strong an illusion of Christian's presence that she bade her chauffeur halt, and requested her companion to walk to the gate and inquire after the young man's identity.

The companion obeyed, and Frau Wahnschaffe, still watching the group, waited very quietly. The companion had no difficulty in getting the information, and reported that the young man was an Englishman named Anthony Potter.

"Ah, yes, yes." That was all Frau Wahnschaffe said, and her interest was extinguished.

That very evening a special delivery letter was brought her. She recognized Christian's handwriting, and everything danced before her eyes. The first thing she was able to see was the name of a small, third-rate Frankfort hotel. Gradually her sight grew steadier, and she read the letter: "Dear Mother: I beg you to grant me an interview in the course of the forenoon to-morrow. It is too late for me to come to you to-day; I have travelled all day and am tired. If I do not hear from you to the contrary, I shall be with you at ten o'clock. I am confident that you will be so good as to see me alone."

Her only thought was: "At last!" And she said the words out loud to herself: "At last!"

She looked at her watch. It was ten o'clock. That meant twelve hours. How was she to pass those twelve hours? All her long life seemed shorter to her than this coming space of time.

She went downstairs through the dark and empty rooms, through the marble hall with its great columns, through the gigantic, mirrored dining-hall, in which the last, faint light of the long summer evening was dying. She went into the park, and heard the plaint of a nightingale. Stars glittered, a fountain plashed, and distant music met her ear. She returned, and found that only fifty minutes had passed. An expression of rage contorted her cold and rigid face. She considered whether she should drive to the city to that shabby little hostelry. She dismissed that plan at once. He was asleep; he

was weary with travel. But why is he in such a place, she asked herself, in a humble house, among strange and lowly people?

She sat down in an armchair, and entered upon her bitter duel with the slothfulness of time, from eleven to midnight, from midnight to the first grey glint of dawn, from that first glint to the early flush of the young morning, thence to full sunrise, and on to the appointed hour.

III

Wherever Johanna Schöntag went she was treated with loving-kindness. Even her relatives with whom she lived treated her with tender considerateness. This tended to lower rather than to raise her in her own self-esteem. She considered subtly: "If I please these, what can I possibly amount to?"

She said: "It is ever so funny that I should be living in this city of egoists. I am the direct antithesis of such brave persons."

Nothing seemed worth doing to her, not even what her heart demanded loudly—the setting out to find Christian. She waited for some compulsion, but none came. She lost herself in trivial fancies. She would sit in a corner, and watch things and people with her clever eyes. "If that bearded man," she thought, "had the nose of his bald neighbour he might look quite human." Or: "Why are there six stucco roses above the door? Why not five or seven?" She tormented herself with these things. The wrongly placed nose and the perverse number of the stucco roses incited her to plan the world's improvement. Suddenly she would laugh, and then blush if people looked her way.

Every night, before she fell asleep, she thought, in spite of herself, of Amadeus Voss and of her promise to write him. Then she would take flight in sleep and forget the morrow. His long letter weighed on her memory as the

most painful experience of her life. Words that made her restless emerged from it in her consciousness—the saying, for instance, concerning the shadow's yearning for its body. The words' mystery lured her on. All voices in the outer world warned her. Their warning but heightened the sting of allurement. She enjoyed her fear and let it grow. The reflection of mirrored things in other mirrors of the mind confused her. At last she wrote; an arrow flew from the taut string.

They met on Kurfürsten Square, and walked up the avenue of chestnut trees toward Charlottenburg. In order to limit the interview, Johanna announced that she must be home at the end of an hour. But the path they chose robbed her of the hope of a quite brief interview. She yielded. To hide her embarrassment, she remarked jestingly on the trees, houses, monuments, beasts, and men. Voss preserved a dry seriousness. She turned to him impatiently. "Well, teacher, aren't you going to talk a bit to the well-behaved little pupil with whom you're taking a walk?"

But Voss had no understanding of the nervous humour of her gentle rebuke. He said: "I am an easy prey; you have but to mock, and I am without defence. I must accustom myself to such lightness and smoothness. It is a bad tone for us to use. You keep looking at me searchingly, as though my sleeve might be torn or my collar stained. I had determined to speak to you as to a comrade. It cannot be done. You are a young lady, and I am hopelessly spoiled for your kind."

Johanna answered sarcastically that at all events it calmed her to see her person and presence extorting a consideration from him which she had not always enjoyed. Voss started. Her contemptuous expression revealed her meaning to him. He lowered his head, and for a while said nothing. Then bitterness gathered on his features. Johanna, gazing straight ahead, felt the danger to herself; she could have averted it; she knew that a courteous phrase would have robbed him of

courage. But she disdained the way out. She wanted to defy him, and said frankly that she was not in the least hurt by his disappointment in her, since it was scarcely her ambition to impress him. Voss endured this in silence, too, but seemed to crouch as for an attack. Johanna asked with an innocent air whether he was still in Christian Wahnschaffe's apartment, and still had charge of his friend's private correspondence.

Voss's answer was dry and objective. He said that he had moved, since his means did not permit him such luxury. The mocking smile on Johanna's lips showed him that she was acquainted with the situation. He added that he had better say that the source of his income had given out. He was living, he told her, in quarters befitting a student in Ansbacher Street, and had made the acquaintance of poverty again. He was not yet so poor, however, that he had to deny himself the pleasure of a guest; so he asked her whether she would take tea with him some day. He did not understand her laughter. Ah, yes, she was a young lady; he had forgotten. Well, perhaps she would condescend to the shop of a confiseur.

His talk aroused her scorn and her impatience.

It was Sunday, and the weather was gloomy. Night was falling. Music resounded from the pavilions in the public gardens. They met many soldiers, each with his girl. Johanna opened her umbrella and walked wearily. "It isn't raining," said Voss. She answered: "I do it so as not to have to think of the rain." The real reason was that the umbrella widened the distance between them. "When do you see Christian?" she suddenly asked in a high-pitched voice, and looked away from him to the other side. "Do you see him often?" She regretted her question at once. It bared her heart to these ambushed eyes.

But Voss had not even heard her. "You still resent the matter of your letter. You can't forgive me for having spied upon your secret. You have no notion of what I gave you

in return. You waste no thought on the fact that I revealed my whole soul to you. Perhaps it wasn't even clear to you that all I wrote you in regard to Wahnschaffe was a confession such as one human being rarely makes to another. It was done by implication, and you, evidently, do not understand that method. I probably overestimated both your understanding and your good will."

"Probably," Johanna replied; "and likewise my good nature, for here you've been as rude as possible again. You would be quite right in what you said, if you didn't leave out one very important thing: there must first be a basic sympathy between two people before you can expect such demands to be honoured."

"Sympathy!" Voss jeered. "A phrase—a conventional formula! What you call sympathy is the Philistine's first resort—tepid, flat, colourless. True sympathy requires such delicate insight of the soul that he who feels it scorns to use the shop-worn, vulgar word. I did not reckon on sympathy. A cleft, such as the cleft between you and me, cannot be bridged by cheap trappings. Do you think I had no instinctive knowledge of your coldness, your aloofness, your irony? Do you take me for the type of pachydermatous animal that leaps into a hedge of roses, because it knows the thorns cannot wound him? Oh, no! Every thorn penetrates my skin. I tell you this in order that you may know henceforth just what you are doing. Each thorn pierces me till I bleed. That was clear to me from the beginning, and yet I took the risk. I have staked all that I am on this game; I have gathered my whole self together and cast it at your feet, careless of the result. Once I desired to deliver myself utterly into the hands of fate."

"I must turn back," Johanna said, and shut her umbrella. "I must take a cab. Where are we?"

"I live on Ansbacher Street, corner of Augsburger, in the third story of the third house. Come to me for one hour; let

it be as a sign that I am an equal in your eyes. You cannot imagine what depends on it for me. It is a wretched and desolate hole. If ever you cross its threshold, it will be a place in which I can breathe. I am not in the habit of begging, but I beg you for this favour. The suspicion which I see in your eyes is fully justified. I have planned to beg you for this, to bring it about. But this plan of mine did not originate to-day or yesterday. It is weeks old; it is older than I know. But that is all. Any other distrust you feel is unjustified."

He stammered these words and gasped them. Johanna looked helplessly away. She was too weak to withstand the passionate eloquence of the man, repulsive and fear-inspiring as he was. Also there was a fearful lure in the daring, in the presence of a flame, in fanning it, in danger, and in watching what would happen. Her life was empty. She needed something to expect and court and fear. She needed the brink of some abyss, some bitter fume, some transcendence of common boundaries. But for the moment she needed to gain time. "Not to-day," she said, with a veiled expression, "some other time. Next week. No, don't urge me. But perhaps toward the end of the week; perhaps Friday. I don't see your purpose, but if you wish it, I'll come Friday."

"It is agreed then. Friday at the same hour." He held out his hand. Hesitatingly she put hers into it. She felt imprisoned in her own aversion, but her glance was firm and almost challenging.

IV

When Christian entered, Frau Wahnschaffe stood massively in the middle of the room. Her arms were lightly folded below her bosom. A wave of pallor passed over her, and she felt chilled. Christian approached. She turned her face, and looked at him out of the corners of her eyes. She sought to speak, but her lips twitched nervously. Christian suddenly lost the simple assurance born of his swift and unreflective

action. He suddenly realized the monstrousness of his errand, and stood quite silent.

"Will you stay with us for some time?" Frau Wahnschaffe asked hoarsely. "Surely you will. I have had your room made ready; you will find everything in order. It was unnecessarily considerate of you to spend the night at an hotel. Do you not know your mother well enough to take it for granted that the house is always ready to receive you?"

"I am sorry, mother," answered Christian, "but I can stay only a few hours. I must not and dare not delay. I have to return to Berlin on the five o'clock train. I am sorry."

Frau Wahnschaffe now turned her full face upon Christian so slowly that the motion had the air of a marionette's. "You are sorry," she murmured. "Ah, yes. I scarcely expected even that much. But everything is ready for you, Christian, your bed and your wardrobes. You have not been here for very long, and it is very long since I have seen you. Let me think: it must be eighteen months. Pastor Werner told me some things about you; they were not pleasant to hear. He was here several times. I seemed unable to grasp his report except in small doses. It seemed to me the man must have had hallucinations, yet he expressed himself very carefully. I said to him: 'Nonsense, my dear pastor, people don't do such things.' You know, Christian, that I find matters of a certain sort difficult to understand. . . . But you look strange, Christian. . . . You look changed, my son. You're dressed differently. Do you no longer dress as you used to? It is strange. Do you not frequent good society? And these fancies of the pastor concerning voluntary poverty and renunciations that you desire to suffer . . . and I hardly recall what—tell me: is there any foundation of truth to all that? For I do not understand."

Christian said: "Won't you sit down beside me for a little, mother? We can't talk comfortably while you stand there."

"Gladly, Christian, let us sit down and talk. It is nice of you to say it in that way."

They sat down side by side on the sofa, and Christian said: "I know I have been guilty of neglect toward you, mother. I should not have waited to let strangers inform you of my decisions and actions. I see now that it makes a mutual understanding harder; only it is so unpleasant and so troublesome to talk about oneself. Yet I suppose it must be done, for what other people report is usually thoroughly wrong. I sometimes planned to write to you, but I couldn't; even while I thought the words, they became misleading and false. Yet I felt no impulse to come to you without any other motive than to give you an explanation. It seemed to me that there should be enough confidence in me in your heart to make a detailed self-justification unnecessary. And I thought it better to risk a breach and estrangement caused by silence, than to indulge in ill-timed talk, and yet avoid neither because I had not been understood."

"You speak of breach and estrangement," Frau Wahnschaffe replied, "as though it were only now threatening us. And you speak as calmly as though it were a punishment for children, and you were quite reconciled to it. Very well, Christian, the breach and the estrangement may come. You will find me too proud to struggle against your mind and your decision. I am not a mother who wants her son's devotion as an alms, nor a woman who would interfere in your world, nor one who will stoop to strive for a right that is denied her. Nothing that breaks my heart need stop your course. But give me, at least, one word to which I can cling in my lonely days of brooding and questioning. The air gives me no answer to my questions, nor my own mind, nor any other's. Explain to me what you are really doing, and why you are doing it. At last, at last you are here; I can see you and hear you. Speak!"

Her words, spoken in a monotonous and hollow voice, stirred

Christian deeply, less through their meaning than through his mother's attitude and gesture—her stern, lost glance, the grief she felt, and the coldness that she feigned. She had found the way to his innermost being, and his great silence was broken. He said: "It isn't easy to explain the life one lives or the events whose necessity is rooted uncertainly in the past. If I search my own past, I cannot tell where these things had their beginning, nor when, nor how. But let me put it this way: He whom a great glare blinds, desires darkness; he who is satiated finds food distasteful; he who has never lost himself in some cause feels shame and the desire to prove himself. Yet even that does not explain what seems to me the essential thing. You see, mother, the world as I gradually got to know it, the institutions of men, harbours a wrong that is very great and that is inaccessible to our ordinary thinking. I cannot tell you exactly in what this great wrong consists. No man can tell us yet, neither the happy man nor the wretched, neither the learned nor the unlettered one. But it exists, and it meets you at every turn. It does no good to reflect about it. But like the swimmer who strips before he leaps, one must dive to the very bottom of life to find the root and origin of that great wrong. And one can be seized by a yearning for that search, which sweeps away all other interests and ambitions, and masters one utterly. It is a feeling that I could not describe to you, mother, not if I were to talk from now until night. It pierces one through, all one's soul and all one's life; and if one strives to withdraw from it, it only becomes keener."

He rose under the impression of the unwonted excitement that he felt, and continued speaking more swiftly. "That wrong does not consist in the mere contrast between poor and rich, between arbitrary licence on the one hand and enforced endurance on the other. No, no. Look, we've all grown up with the view that crime meets its expiation, guilt its punishment, that every human deed bears its reward within itself, and that, in a word, a justice rules which compensates, orders,

avenges, if not before our eyes, then in some higher region. But that is not true. I believe in no such justice; it does not exist. Nor is it possible that such a justice exists in the universe, for if it did, the lives men lead could not be as they are. And if this superhuman justice of which men speak and on which they rely does not exist, then the source of that great wrong that is in the world must be within the life of man itself, and we must find that source and know its nature. But you cannot find it by observing life from without; you must be within it, within it to the lowest depths. That is it, mother, that is it. Perhaps you understand now."

A measureless astonishment spread over Frau Wahnschaffe's features. She had never heard such things, she had never prepared her mind to hear them, and least of all to hear them from him, the beautiful, the ever festive, the inviolable by any ugliness. For it was that vision of him which she still nursed within. She meant to answer, she almost thought the words had escaped her: "That search is not your function in the world, yours less than any other's!" The desperate words had already shadowed her face, when she looked upon him, and saw that he was rapt not from the sphere she hated, avoided, and feared for him, but from herself, her world, his world and former self. She beheld one almost unknown in a ghostly shimmer, and a presage stirred in her frozen soul; and in that presage was the yearning of which he had spoken, although its very name was strange to her. Also the fear of losing his love utterly let all the years behind her seem but wasted years, and she said shyly: "You indicated, did you not, that a particular purpose had brought you here? What is it?"

Christian sat down again. "It is a very difficult and delicate matter," he answered. "I came without realizing its exact nature, of which I seem but now to become aware. The woman whom I am taking care of, Karen Engelschall—you have heard of her, mother—desires your pearls; and I, I

promised to bring them to her. Her desire is as strange as my request. The whole thing, put bluntly, sounds like madness." He smiled, he even laughed, yet his face had grown very pale.

Frau Wahnschaffe merely pronounced his name: "Christian." That was all. She spoke the word in a toneless, lingering voice, almost hissing the s.

Christian went on: "I said I was taking care of that woman . . . that isn't the right expression. It was a critical moment in my life when I found her. Many people were astonished that I didn't surround her with splendour and luxury, when that was still in my power. But that would have availed nothing. I would have missed my aim utterly by such a method; and she herself did not dream of demanding it. If it weren't for her relatives, who constantly urge her to rebellion and desire, she would be quite contented. People chatter to her too much. She, of course, doesn't understand my purpose; often she regards me as an enemy. But is that strange after such a life as hers? Mother, you may believe me when I assure you that all the pearls in the world can not bring a soul forgetfulness of such a life."

He spoke disconnectedly and nervously. His fingers twitched, his brow was wrinkled and smooth in turn. The words he spoke and must yet speak pained him; the monstrousness of his demand, which he had but now fully realized, and the possibility that his request might be refused—these things drove the blood to his heart. His mother neither stirred nor spoke. Within a few minutes her features seemed to have shrunk into the crumpled mask of extreme old age.

Christian's fright stung him to further speech. "She is an outcast, one of the despised and rejected. That is true; or rather, that is what she was. But it is not permitted us to pass judgment. An accident placed a photograph of you, wearing your pearls, in her possession; and perhaps she felt as though you stood before her in person, and there came over her a sud-

den sense of what it means to be an outcast and despised. You and she—perhaps the world should hold no such contrasts; and the pearls became to her confused and half-mad vision a symbol of compensation, of moral equilibrium. She will not keep the pearls, by the way, nor would I permit her to do so. I pledge myself that they shall be returned, if you will accept my mere word as a pledge. I shall return the pearls, and you yourself may set the date. Only please don't disappoint me in my quandary."

Frau Wahnschaffe took a deep breath, and her tone was harsh: "You foolish boy."

Christian lowered his eyes.

"You foolish boy," Frau Wahnschaffe repeated, and her lips trembled.

"Why do you say that?" Christian asked softly.

She arose, and beckoned him with a weary gesture. He followed her into her bed-chamber. She took a key out of a leather-case, and unlocked the steel door of the safe built into the wall. There were her jewels—diadems and clasps, bracelets, brooches, pins, rings and lavallières studded with precious stones. She grasped the rope of pearls, and, as she took it out, its end trailed on the floor. The pearls were almost equal in magnificence and of uncommon size. Frau Wahnschaffe said: "These pearls, Christian, have meant more to me than such things usually do to a woman. Your father gave them to me when you were born. I always wore them in a spirit of thankfulness to God for the gift of you. I am not ashamed to confess that. They seemed, I thought, to form a circle within which you and I alone had being. I have neither touched them nor looked at them since you started on your strange wanderings, and I believe that the pearls themselves have sickened. They are so yellow, and some have lost their lustre. Did you seriously think I could deny you anything, no matter what it is? It is true that your ways are too strange for me now. My brain seems befogged when I try to grasp

all that, and I feel blind and lame. Yet to-day some voice has spoken for you, and I would not lose that voice. So far I have heard only vain lamentations. My whole soul shudders, but I begin to see you again, and whatever you ask I must give you. You are to know that, and indeed, you must have known that or you would not have come. Take them!" She turned aside to hide the pain upon her face, and with outstretched arm held out to him the rope of pearls. "But your father must never know," she murmured. "If you desire to return the pearls, bring them yourself if possible. I would not know for whom they are. Do with them as though they were your property."

Property! Christian listened to the word, but it did not penetrate his consciousness. It fell and disappeared like a stone in water; for him, it had lost all meaning. And he looked upon the pearls with surprise and indifference, as though they were a toy, and it were strange to talk and trouble so much about them. Their preciousness, the value which amounted to millions, was no longer a living fact of consciousness to him, but like a dim memory of something heard long ago. Therefore he did not feel the burden of his mother's trust and his possession. The way in which he tucked the pearls into a case his mother had found, had something so carelessly business-like, and his word of thanks so obvious a formality, that it was clear he had forgotten the obstacles to his errand which he had felt so keenly a little while before.

He remained with his mother for another hour. But he spoke little, and the environment, the splendour of the room, the air of the house, the solemnity and sloth, the emptiness and aloofness, all this seemed to disquiet him. Frau Wahnschaffe was unconscious of that. She talked and became silent, and in her eyes flickered the fear over the passing of her hour. When Christian arose to bid her farewell, her face became ashen, and she controlled herself with extreme difficulty. But when she was alone she reeled a little, and grasped for support

one of the carven columns of her bed and gave a cry. Then suddenly she smiled.

Perhaps it was a delusion that caused her to smile; perhaps it was a flash of insight like lightning in a dark sky.

V

After his return from Africa, Felix Imhof was practically a ruined man. Unfortunate mining speculations had swallowed up the greater part of his fortune. But his attitude and behaviour were unchanged.

Exposure to the sun and air had almost blackened his skin, and his bohemian friends called him the Abyssinian prince. He was leaner than ever, his eyes protruded more greedily, his laughter and speech were noisier, and the tempo of his life was more accelerated. If any one asked after his well-being, he answered: "There's two years' fuel left in this machine. After that—exit!"

He had one dwelling in Munich and another in Berlin, but his numerous and complicated undertakings drove him to a different city every week.

Some political friends persuaded him to join in the founding of a great daily representing the left wing of liberalism, and he consented. A new catchword arose, a People's Theatre; and it was his ambition to be named among those who furthered the new panacea. He caused the publishing house that he had financed to issue a new edition of the classics, distinguished by tasteful editing and exquisite bookmaking. He received twenty to thirty telegrams daily, and sent between forty and fifty; he kept three typists busy, and suffered from the lack of a telephone while he was in motor cars or on express trains. He discovered the value of a half-forgotten painter of the Quattrocento for modern connoisseurs, and by means of literary advertisements caused fabulous prices to be offered for the painter's few and faded works. He gambled on the American

stock exchange, and made four hundred thousand marks; next week he lost double the amount in a deal in Roumanian timber.

Sitting in his steam-bath, he sketched the plan of a mock-heroic poem; between three and five at night he dictated in alternation a translation of a novel by Lesage and an essay in economics; he carried on an elaborate correspondence with the chief of a theosophical society; drank like an aristocratic fraternity student, spent money like water, subsidized young artists, was constantly on the trail of new inventions, and fairly pursued promising engineers, chemists, and experts in aeronautics. One of his boldest plans was the founding of a stock company for the exploitation of the hidden coal-fields of the Antarctic regions. He assured all doubters that the profits would run to billions and that the difficulties were trifling.

One day he made the acquaintance of a technical expert named Schlehdorn. The man hardly inspired confidence, but Imhof overlooked that as well as his shabbiness. As though by the way Schlehdorn mentioned the difficulty caused the German marine by the fact that all glass for ships' port-holes had to be imported from Belgium and France. The secret of its manufacture was stringently guarded by certain factories in those countries. Whoever succeeded in unearthing it was a made man. Imhof swallowed the bait. He let the man inform him in regard to possible plans, agreed with him upon a special telegraphic code, and financed him generously. The telegrams he received sounded hopeful. Schlehdorn, to be sure, demanded larger and larger sums. He explained that he had had to bribe influential persons. Imhof deliberately silenced his suspicions; he was curious what the end would be.

One day he received a telegram from Schlehdorn demanding that he come at once to Andenne with fifty thousand francs. The matter was as good as settled. Imhof took fifty thousand francs as well as his revolver, and followed the summons. Schlehdorn was waiting for him, and conducted him through

the darkness to a suspicious looking inn. He was led to a room at the end of a long hall, and the moment he had entered it, Imhof recognized the situation for what it was. He had hardly looked about when two elegantly dressed gentlemen appeared. The company took seats about a round table. Schlehdorn spread out some documents in front of him, and looked significantly at one of his accomplices. At that moment Imhof leaped up, backed against the wall, drew his revolver, and said calmly: "You needn't take any further trouble, gentlemen. The fifty thousand francs are deposited in my bank in Brussels. The trick was too obvious and this place too suspicious. If any one stirs, he'll have to have his tailor mend small, round holes in his suit to-morrow." His cool determination saved him. The three men were intimidated, and let him take his travelling bag and slip out. They themselves, of course, escaped as swiftly as possible after that.

But this experience, though he gave a humorous description of it, had a paralysing effect on Imhof. Considering the causes of his inner tension, this incident was trivial, yet it somehow brought into relief symptoms of weariness and satiety that multiplied and became noticeable. His cynicism would rise to the point of savagery, and then break down into sentimentality. "Give me a little garden, two little rooms, a dog and a cow, and I won't look at the scarlet woman of the world's Babylon again," he perorated insincerely. A violent illness seized upon him. Theatrically he made his final dispositions, and summoned his friends to hear his last words. When he recovered, he gave a feast that was the talk of all Munich for three weeks and cost him sixty thousand marks.

On this occasion he met Sybil Scharnitzer and fell in love with her. It was like an inner explosion. He acted like a madman; he declared himself capable of any crime for this woman's sake. Sybil was asked how she liked him. Her answer was quite laconic: "I don't like niggers."

Her words were reported to him by three different witnesses. The sting of them went deep. He stood in front of his mirror in the night, laughed bitterly, and smashed the glass with his fist so that the blood flowed.

The image of Sybil pursued him. He went wherever he was likely to meet her. In the girl's presence he became a boy again. He found no words, blushed and stammered, and became the laughing stock of those who knew him. One evening he ventured most shyly to speak to her of his feelings. She looked at him coldly, and her eyes said: "I don't like niggers." They were hard, selfish, stubborn eyes.

"I don't like niggers." The words became furies that pursued him. A month later business took him to Paris, and in a cabaret he saw a young Negro woman dancing a snake dance. An impulse of revenge urged him to make advances to the girl. The revenge was directed less against the unfeeling woman who had repulsed him so pitilessly than against himself. It was the defiant rage of his own desires. He boasted of his relations with the Negro woman, and appeared with her in public. What drove him thereafter from dissipation to dissipation was the terror of emptiness, the excess at the edge of life, where nature itself demands the final fulfilment of human fate.

And his fate was fulfilled.

VI

"Oh, you're lying to me!" Karen screamed, as Christian handed her the jewel-box. He had not even spoken, but his gesture had promised her the incredible; and she screamed to guard herself against the ravage of a premature delight.

The greed with which she opened the little lock and lifted the top of the box was indescribable. Her blood fled from beneath her skin. She felt throttled. There lay the lustrous pearls, with their faint tints of pink and lilac. "Latch

the door! " she hissed, and raced to do it, since he seemed too slow. She shot the bolt and turned the key. For a moment she stood still and pressed her hands to her head. Then she went back to the jewels.

She touched the pearls with timid finger-tips. She had two fears: the pearls seemed as warm as living flesh; her own touch, though so gentle, might have been too rough. The glance she turned upon Christian faltered like a wounded bird. Suddenly she grasped his left hand brutally with both of hers, bowed deep down, and pressed her mouth to it.

" Don't, Karen, don't," Christian stammered, but he sought in vain to draw his hand from her furious clasp. More than a minute she crouched there on her knees, over his hand, and he saw the flesh of her back quiver under the cloth of her garment. " Be sensible, Karen," he begged her, and tried to persuade himself that he neither felt a profound stirring of the soul nor gazed into the depth of another. " What are you doing, Karen? Please don't! "

She released him, and he left her. Behind him she locked the door again. It was a curious circumstance that she took off her shoes and thus approached the treasure. When she was not beholding it, she still doubted its presence. With disconnected gestures, full of fear, she finally lifted the pearls from their case. At every soft clink she sighed and looked around. The unexpected length and weight of the chain amazed her utterly. Gently she let it glide upon the floor, then followed it first on her knees, then with her whole body, until she had brought her lips, her breath, her eyes as near as possible to that gleaming splendour. She counted the pearls, and counted them again. She made an error. Once she counted one hundred and thirty-three, and another time one hundred and thirty-seven. Then she counted no more, but looked at single pearls and breathed upon them, or moistened her finger and touched them.

She started at a rustling in the outer hall; then she again

sunk her whole self into the act of seeing. She dreamed herself into rooms which had known the glow of these marvels, into the bodies of women whom they had adorned, into coils of events in which they had played a part. Shivers ran over her body. She fought with the desire to place the pearls about her own neck. First it seemed blasphemous rashness; then it seemed conceivable after all. She arose softly, held the necklace in her hand, and slipped it over her head. On tip-toe she walked to the mirror, and peered at her image from half-closed lids. It was here, here with her, and she wore it like that woman in the picture. The pearls were on her body—the pearls!

Evening came upon her, then night, but it brought no sleep. The pearls were in bed with her, close to her breast, warm by her skin. She felt them to assure herself of their presence; she listened to vague noises in the house, which were like threats of robbery to her. Then she lit a lamp and gazed at the pearls, and already she knew some of them. They turned faces upon her, and whispered to her, and were distinguishable through a warmer glow or a more pallid tint. Some of these were familiar and some quite strange, but they were all here —a shimmering wonder and a new life.

Thus too she passed the day that came and the night that followed the day. She knew that disease was burrowing in her body. She had expected it to show; but when it came, it was not with sudden violence but with treacherous sloth. One part of her after another was affected, and at last she could move freely no longer. She knew, too, that it was no ordinary indisposition from which one recovers within a few days. She felt it to be a process as of ripening which brings a fruit to its fall, as a concentration of the hostile forces that had before been scattered in effectiveness and in time. The life she had lived demanded a reckoning. The physician in the Hamburg hospital had foretold it all months before; now the time had come. She was very undemonstrative about her

condition. She lay quietly in bed. She suffered no pain, and had but little fever.

Lying still there did not make her impatient. She was glad of the necessity; there was no better way of guarding the pearls. People might come and go. She had her treasure next her body, beside her very breast. She was sure of it at every moment and with every movement, and no one was the wiser. She pictured to herself what they would say and do, if she were to show them her secret treasure, if she were to call in one of those who all unconsciously passed her door or climbed the rickety stairs, or some one from the street or the tavern or the grog-shop—a poor fellow who had slaved all week, or a woman who sold her body for three marks, or another who had seven children to feed. In concentrated triumph she looked through the window at the rows of windows across the street. There lived the others whom misery throttled and in whom suffering whined. Like ants they crept about in the tall houses from cellar to garret, and had no suspicion of Karen's pearls. Karen's pearls! How that sounded and sang and glowed and glimmered—Karen's pearls. . . .

At last the secrecy became a burden. She did not enjoy her great possession as she would have done, had but one other shared the knowledge of it. She needed at least one other pair of eyes. She thought of Isolde Schirmacher, but the girl was too talkative and too stupid. She thought of the wife of Gisevius, of a seamstress on the fourth floor, of the huckstress in the street, of Amadeus Voss.

At last she hit upon Ruth Hofmann. The girl seemed the least harmful of all, and she determined to show her the pearls.

Under the pretext of asking the girl to fetch her something from the apothecary's, she sent a message to the Hofmanns, and Ruth came in. Karen waited until Isolde had left the room; then she sat up and asked the girl to lock the door.

Then she said: "Come here!" She turned the coverlet aside, and there lay the great heap of pearls upon the linen. "Look at that," she said. "Those are real pearls, and they're mine. But if you mention it to anybody, God help you, or my name ain't Karen Engelschall."

Ruth was amazed. Yet she looked on the pearls not with womanish desirousness, but like an imaginative soul beholding a marvel of the natural world. There was tension in her face, but it was wholly pleasurable. "Where did you get them?" she asked naïvely. "How wonderful they are. I've never seen anything like them. Are they all yours? They remind me of the Arabian Nights." She kneeled down beside the bed, and surrounded the heap of pearls with her hands and smiled. The hanging lamp burned, and in the dim light of the room the pearls had an almost purple glow, and seemed animated by some dusky blood that pulsed within them.

Karen was annoyed by Ruth's question, and yet she was almost as happy as she thought she would be in the surprise of another beholder. "Stupid! 'Course they belong to me. D'you think I'd steal them? They're his mother's pearls," she added mysteriously, and bowed her head to Ruth's ear. She was startled for a moment as she did so by the fragrance as of grass or the moist earth of February that emanated from the girl. "They're his mother's pearls," she repeated, "and he brought them to me." She did not know in what a deeply moved and reverential tone she spoke of Christian. Ruth listened to that tone, and doubts and guesses of her own were hushed.

"What ails you?" she asked, as she arose from her knees.

"I don't know," Karen answered, covering the pearls again. "Maybe nothing. I like to rest; sometimes it does a person good."

"Is any one with you at night? It might happen that you need something. Have you no one?"

"Lord, I don't need anything," Karen answered with as

much indifference as possible. "And if I do, I can get out o' bed and fetch it. I'm not that bad yet." The coarseness vanished from her face, and yielded to an expression of helpless wonder as she went on hurriedly: "He offered to stay up here at night. He wanted to sleep on the sofa, so I could wake him up if I felt bad. He said he wouldn't mind and it'd be a pleasure. He spends his whole evenings here now, and sits at the table studying in his books. Why does he study so much? Does a man like him have to do that? But what do you think of him wanting to sleep there and watch me? It's foolish!"

"Foolish?" Ruth answered. "No, I don't think so at all. I was going to suggest doing the same thing. He and I could take turns. I can work while I watch too. I mean, of course, if it is necessary. But it won't do to leave any one who is sick alone at night." She shook her head, and her ash-blond hair moved gently.

"What funny people you are," Karen said, and thrust her disordered hair almost to her eyes. "Real funny people." She feigned to be looking for something on the bed, and her eyes that refused to look at Ruth seemed to flee.

Ruth determined to consult Christian concerning the night-watches.

VII

She spoke to Christian, but he said that her services as a night nurse were not necessary. He could not bring himself to assign such a task to her. She amazed him by her inner clarity and ripeness of character, yet he saw the child in her that should be spared all the more because she was not willing to spare herself.

She herself had thought a great deal about him, and had arrived at definite conclusions which were not very far from the truth. To be sure, she had heard gossip in the house, both from Karen Engelschall and from others, but her own vision

and instinct had taught her best. What seemed mysterious to all others revealed itself as simple and necessary to her. It was never the rare and beautiful that astonished her in life; it was always the common and the mean.

At first she had been badly frightened of Karen. The poverty in which her family had always lived had brought her into familiar contact with the ugly things beneath the surface of society, yet she had never met a woman like Karen —so degraded and so sunk in savagery. To approach her had cost her each time a pang and a struggle.

But she had helped when Karen's child was born; and on the following morning she had been there when Christian was in the room too. She had seen him bring the woman a glass of wine on an earthenware plate. He had smiled awkwardly, and his gestures had been uncertain; and in a flash she had comprehended everything. She knew whence he came and whence the woman came, and what had brought them together, and why they were living as they were. The truth which came to her seemed so beautiful a one to her that she flushed and hurried from the room; for she was afraid of laughing out in her joy, and seeming frivolous and foolish.

From that day on she no longer regarded Karen shyly or with aversion, but with a sisterly feeling that was quite natural, at least, to her.

Then came the incident of the pearls. She suspected their value only from Karen's feverish ecstasy, her infinitely careful touch, the morbid glitter of her eyes. But what impressed her most was not the pearls, nor Karen, nor Karen's horrible happiness, but what she guessed of Christian's action and its motives.

One Saturday night, when Isolde Schirmacher had gone out with one of her father's journeymen, Christian rang the bell of the Hofmann flat, and begged Ruth to go to a nearby public telephone and summon a physician. Karen was evidently worse. She complained of no pain, but she was approaching

a state of exhaustion. Ruth hastened to a certain Doctor Voltolini in Gleim Street who was known to her, and brought him back with her. The physician examined Karen. He was frank concerning his uncertainty with regard to her symptoms, and gave some general advice. Afterward Ruth and Christian sat together beside the bed. Karen stared at the ceiling. Her expression changed continually; her breathing was regular but rapid. At times she sighed; at times her glance sought Christian, but flitted past him. Once or twice she gazed searchingly at Ruth.

Next day Christian came to see Ruth. She was alone; she was usually alone. When she unlatched the door which gave immediately upon the public hall she held a pen-holder in her hand. Her eyes still held the absorption of the occupation from which she had come. But when Christian asked whether he was interrupting her, she answered "No" with quieting assurance.

He held out his hand. With a gently rhythmic gesture she put her smooth, young hand into his.

She was voluble. Everything about her was touched with swiftness—her walk and glance, her speech and decisions and actions.

"I must see the place where you live," she announced to him, and on the next forenoon she visited his room. She was a little breathless, because, according to her custom, she had run down the stairs. She looked about her very frankly, and hid her seriousness under a cheerful vividness of behaviour. With boyish innocence of movement she sat down on the edge of the table, took an apple from her pocket, and began to nibble at it. She said she had mentioned Karen to an assistant whom she knew at the Polyclinic, and the lady had promised to come and examine Karen.

Christian thanked her. "I don't believe that medical help can do much for her," he said.

"Why not?"

"I can't tell you the reason. But where Karen is concerned, nature pursues a quite logical method."

"Perhaps you are right," Ruth answered. "But that sounds as though you had little confidence in science. Am I right? Why, then, are you studying medicine?"

"It's the merest accident. Some one happened to call my attention to it as one of a hundred possible doors into the open. It seemed to me that it might lead to a very early usefulness. It offers a definite aim, and it is concerned with people—with human beings!" More pertinent reasons that stirred within him, and that he might have given her, were not yet ripe for speech, so he clung to a banality.

"Yes, people," said Ruth, and looked at him searchingly. After a while she added: "You must know a great deal; there must be a great deal in you."

"What do you mean by that?"

She was the first human being in whose presence he felt wholly free of the compulsion to feign and to guard himself. In her there was a pure element that was frank and enthusiastic, that lived and vibrated with the souls of others. Her instincts had freedom and sureness, and her whole inner life radiated an irresistible intensity. The very stones gave up their souls to her. She was the seeing friend of inanimate things. She forgot neither words nor images, and her impatience to communicate what she had felt and the courage she had to acknowledge and follow her own heart surrounded her with an atmosphere as definite as the strong, sanative fragrance of plants in spring.

Life and its law seemed simple to her. The stars ruled one's fate; that fate expressed itself through the passions of our blood; the mind formed, illuminated, cleansed the process.

She told Christian about her father.

David Hofmann was a typical Jew of the lower middle-classes from the eastern part of the country. He had been a merchant, but his business had failed, and he had left home

to begin life over again. By indomitable toil he had saved up a few thousand marks; but a sharper had done him out of his savings, and in poverty and debt he had renewed the struggle for a third time. His industry was tireless, his patience magnificent. From Breslau he had moved to Posen, from Posen to Stettin, thence to Lodz, and from Lodz to Königsberg. All winter he had tramped the country roads from village to village and from manor-house to manor-house. He had seen his wife and his youngest child sicken and die, and had finally set his last hope on the life and opportunities of the metropolis. Eighteen months ago he had come to Berlin with Ruth and Michael, and here too he was on his feet day and night. With mind exhausted and enfeebled body, he still dreamed of some reward and success to ease his approaching latter years. But failure was his portion, and in hours of reflection he would yield to despair.

She told Christian about her brother.

Michael was taciturn. He never laughed; he had no friend, sought no diversions, and avoided the society of men. He suffered from his Jewishness, shrank nervously from the hatred that he suspected everywhere, repelled every advance, and felt all activity to be futile. During the forenoon he would lie on his bed for hours with his hands behind his head and smoke cigarettes; then he strolled to the little restaurant where he met his father for their midday meal. When he returned he would loiter in the yard and the alleys and at the factory gates, beside fences or public-houses. With hat pulled down and hunched shoulders, he observed life. Then he returned home and sat around, brooding and smoking. He tried to avoid being seen in the evening, when Ruth sat down to her work or their father sighed with weariness.

His eyes, which seemed to lift their gaze from a great depth, were of a golden brown, and their irises, like Ruth's, contrasted strongly with the brilliant whiteness of the eye-ball.

Ruth said: "The other day I happened to come up when

half a dozen street Arabs were following him and crying: 'Sheeny!' He slunk along with bowed back and lowered head. His face was terribly white; he twitched every time he heard the word. I took him by the hand, but he thrust me back. That evening father complained that business had been poor. Michael suddenly leaped up, and said: 'What does it matter? Why do you try to do anything in such a world as this? It is too loathsome to touch. Let's starve to death and be done with it. Why torment ourselves?" Father was horrified, and did not answer. He thinks that Michael hates him because he has not been able to keep us from poverty and want. I do my best to talk him out of it, but he feels himself guilty, guilty toward us, his children; and that is hard, harder than penury."

She felt it to be her duty to try to sustain the poor man, who tormented himself with reproaches, and to renew his hope. She consoled him with her lovely serenity. It was her pleasure to clear difficulties from his path, and then to declare that they had been negligible.

When she had been a little girl of seven she had nursed her mother through her last illness. She had done the work of a servant, and cooked at the great stove, when she could hardly reach the lids of the pots. She had watched over her brother, gone errands, put off creditors, and gained respite from sheriffs. She had collected money that was due; and at each change of dwelling she had created order in the house, and won the good-will of those on whom her family would be dependent. She had mended linen and brushed clothes, driven care away, caused insults to be forgotten, and brought some cheer into the darkest hours. She had found some sweetness in life, even when bitterness rose to the very brim.

Christian asked her what she was working at. She answered that she was preparing herself to take her degree. She had been relieved of all fees at the gymnasium. To help her father, whose earnings decreased steadily, she gave private

lessons. To prolong her efforts far into the night cost her no struggle; five hours of sleep refreshed her and renewed her strength. In the morning she would get breakfast, set the room and kitchen to rights, and then start upon her path of work and duty with an air and mien as though it were a pleasure trip. She carried her dinner in her pocket. If it was too frugal, she would run to an automatic restaurant late in the afternoon.

One evening she returned from a charity kitchen, where twice a week she helped for half an hour to serve the meals. She told Christian about the people whom she was accustomed to see there—those whom the great city had conquered. She imitated gestures and expressions, and reported fragments of overheard speech. She communicated to him the greed, disgust, contempt, and shame that she had seen. Her observation was of a marvellous precision. Christian accompanied her on the next occasion, and saw little, almost nothing. He was aware of people in torn and shabby garments, who devoured a stingy meal without pleasure, dipped the crusts of bread into soup, and surreptitiously licked the spoon that had conveyed their last mouthful. There were hollow faces and dim eyes, foreheads that seemed to have been flattened by hydraulic pressure, and over it all a lifelessness as of scrapped machinery. Christian was teased as by a letter in an unknown tongue, and he began to understand how little he had learned to feel and see.

Although he had tried in no way to call attention to his presence, and had seemed at first glance but another wanderer from the street, a strange movement had passed through the hall. It had lasted no longer than three seconds, but Ruth, too, had felt the vibration. She was just filling one hundred and twenty plates, set in a fourfold circle, with vegetables from a huge cauldron. She looked up in surprise. She caught sight of the distinguished, almost absurdly courteous face of Christian, and she was startled. With mystical clarity she

perceived the radiation of a power that wandered through the air without aim and lay buried in a soul. She bent her head over the steaming cauldron, so that her hair fell forward over her cheeks, and went on ladling out the vegetables. But she thought of the many unhappy creatures who waited for her on some hour of some day—suffering, confused, broken men and women—whom she desired so passionately to help, but to whom she could never be or give the miracle which had suddenly been revealed in that all but momentary vibration.

In a wild enthusiasm that was foreign to her nature she thought: " One must kneel and gather up all one's soul. . . ."

The one hundred and twenty tin plates were filled.

She thought of her poor. There was a young girl in a home for the blind, to whom she read on Sunday evenings. There was an asylum for the shelterless in Acker Street. She would look over the inmates and then ask help for them from charitable men and women who had come to expect her on this errand. In Moabit she had by chance come upon a woman with a baby at her breast; both were near starvation. She had saved them, had procured work and shelter for the woman, and taken the child to a home for infants. But these external things did not suffice her. She sought the establishment of human relations and the gift of confidence. She wrote letters for people, mediated between those whom life was threatening to divide, and thus, by giving her very self, she had also earned the fanatical devotion of that young mother.

She knew the names of many who were in great danger, and she knew many houses in which want was bitter. Once her interest had been excited by some children cowering in a corner during a socialistic women's meeting. Another time chance had led her into the home of a striker. She had been present when a poor woman had been dragged from the canal, and hastened to the suicide's family. On her way from giving a lesson to an errand of charity in a hospital, she had met an

expelled student named Jacoby at the greasy table of a coffee-house, where he had begged her to meet him. Bad company and want threatened him with destruction. She had argued with him concerning his beliefs and principles and friends, and persuaded him into new courage and another attempt.

In the street that ran parallel to her own, there lived a machinist by the name of Heinzen with his family. An accident in a factory had robbed the man of both his legs, and the frightful nervous shock had reduced him to a paralytic condition. He usually lay in a state of convulsive rigour. One day a neighbour who was plagued with rheumatism had visited him; and this man had become aware of the fact that if Heinzen touched any part of his body the pain there was alleviated at once. The rumour had spread like fire. People talked of the miracle of magnetic healing, and a great many sick men and women came to Heinzen to be cured. He would take no money from them; but those who believed—and their numbers increased daily—brought his wife food and other gifts.

Ruth had heard of this. She had been in Heinzen's flat. She was filled by what she had seen, and gave Christian a vivid account of her impressions.

Christian looked at her wonderingly. "Ruth," he said, "little Ruth, those are such difficult matters. If you once begin to be absorbed by them, life itself is too short. I always thought that if one succeeded in quite exhausting but a single human soul, one would know a great deal and could well be content. But life is like the sea. Don't you have to think of it every minute? And how is it that you are always so full of brightness? I don't understand that."

With radiant eyes Ruth looked into space. Then she arose, and from her single shelf of books she took down a narrow yellow volume, turned to a familiar page, and read out with childlike emphasis: "Concerning the joy of the fishes.

Chuang-tse and Hui-tse stood on a bridge that spans the Hao. Chuang-tse said: 'Look how the fishes dart. It is the joy of the fishes.' 'Thou art no fish,' said Hui-tse, 'how canst thou know wherein the joy of the fishes consists?' And he continued: 'I am not like thee and know thee not, but this I know, that thou art no fish and canst know naught of the fishes.' Chuang-tse answered: 'Let us return to thy question, which was: How can I know wherein the joy of the fishes consists? In truth thou didst know that I knew and yet thou askedst. It matters not. I know from my own delight in the water.'"

Christian pondered the parable.

"Don't you know it, you of all people, from your delight in the water?" asked Ruth, and bent her head forward to catch his look.

Christian smiled an uncertain smile.

"Won't you go with me to Heinzen's house to-morrow?"

He nodded and smiled again. He understood suddenly what manner of human being sat beside him.

VIII

It was two o'clock at night when Christian got up from the table in Karen's room and closed his books. He went to the sofa to lie down as he was. Toward evening Karen had been seized by a violent fever. The woman physician to whom Ruth had appealed had been there at noon, and had spoken of tuberculosis of the bones.

Curled up in a wooden chair by the oven lay a small, white cat. She had run in a few days before, and had made herself at home since no one drove her out. Christian had always disliked cats intensely. He stopped a moment and considered whether he shouldn't drive the cat out. Observing the animal he reconsidered.

Ruth, little Ruth. . . . The words ran through his head.

Karen slept heavily. On her dim face the muscles were taut. A dream raged behind her forehead. In her throat a fearful cry was gathering.

A dream! She stood in front of a barn which had a little window in its slanting roof. A man and a woman had just disappeared through that window. She knew their purpose at once. In the darkness, half-invisible, stood two lads, and it enraged the dreamer that the lads were eagerly listening. She herself was tormented by the sensual envy and hatred that arises in people when they see others in the throes of passion. Her blood tingled and her heart throbbed. Suddenly the barn seemed to have swung around, or she to have insensibly changed her station. The barn was open; one whole wall had disappeared. But the couple were not above, where they had entered; they were down in the depths. The man was fully clothed, but nothing was visible of the woman except her black stockings in the straw. From them both streamed forth something unspeakably disgustful—a heated, sweetish air. The two lads, as though seized by St. Vitus' dance, hurled themselves at each other. Then Karen felt her bodily personality dissolve. She was no longer Karen; she was that sensual miasma, she was the woman with the man. She lost herself in the straw, in its reddish-brown light, in those black stockings; and as she lay there, her body swelled and expanded and became a gelatinous, greyish-yellow ball, and reached even to the roof of the barn. Then the ball became transparent, and she saw within it lizards and toads and tiny, scarlet horses, on which tiny horsemen were riding, and soldiers and spiders and worms, a loathsome swarm. The horrible passions that penetrated everything turned into a throttling torment. The ball burst. A corpse fluttered about like charred paper. A white shadow expanded. Karen gave a shriek, and started from her sleep.

Her first gesture was to grasp the pearls.

Christian went up to the bed.

She murmured wildly: "Are you still here? What are you doing?"

He gave her water to drink. "I've been dreaming," she said, and touched the glass with trembling lips. The elements of her dream were already dissolving in her mind and escaping a formulation in speech. But the sense of that dream's frightfulness increased; in the depth of her consciousness flickered the terror of death.

"I've been dreaming," she repeated and shook. After a while she asked: "Why are you up so late? What did you do all day that you've got to work till late at night? Why do you work so hard? Tell me!"

He shook his head and the words, "Ruth, little Ruth," passed through his head. "Didn't your mother visit you to-day?" he asked, and smoothed her pillows.

"Tell me what you've been doing all day!" she persisted.

"In the forenoon I went to lectures." "And then?" "Then I went to see Botho Thüngen, who was very anxious to talk something over with me." "And then?" "Then I went to court with Lamprecht and Jacoby. A servant girl in Kurfürsten Street gave birth to a child and strangled it to death immediately after birth." "Did they send her up?" "She was condemned to five years in the penitentiary. Her counsel took us to her, and Lamprecht talked to her. She was half-clad, and kept staring at me." "And where were you then?" "I went to meet Amadeus Voss. He wrote me." "Did he ask you for money?" "No, he begged me to come and meet Johanna Schöntag in his room." "Who is she?" "An old friend." "What does she want of you?" "I don't know." "And then?" "Then I came back by way of Moabit and Plötzensee." "On foot? All that distance? And then?" "Then I came here." "But you didn't stay!" "I went over to see Ruth." "Why do you always go to see the Jewess?" Karen murmured, and her face was sombre. "Give me your hand," she suddenly said roughly, and stretched

out her right hand, while her left clawed itself into the pearls under the coverlet. She had hurt her left hand. When the widow Engelschall had been there she had dug her nails into her own palm, so convulsively had she grasped her treasure.

The widow Engelschall had written a blackmailing letter to Privy Councillor Wahnschaffe, and had read it to Karen. Niels Heinrich had stolen two thousand marks; the money had to be found or he would be apprehended. In the letter she had shamelessly demanded ten thousand. Karen had tried to prevent her mother from sending the letter, and the old woman had raised a terrible outcry.

Karen thought it was almost pleasant to be ill. But why did he not give her his hand?

The little cat had jumped from the chair. With tail erect she stood in front of Christian, and blinked her eyes and mewed very softly. She seemed undecided, then suddenly took heart and jumped on his knee. For a moment he struggled with his old aversion. Then the soft white fur and the grace of the little body tempted him. Timidly he touched the little animal's head and back, and bent over it and smiled. The kitten pleased him.

"What've you done with my child?" Karen had asked her mother. The answer had been a rowdy laugh. If he knew that she had asked after her child, perhaps he would look at her more kindly. But she could not tell him; and the memory of the old woman's laughter had left a dread.

For a while she held out her hand dumbly. Then she let it fall, and folded back the covers and crept out of bed. She whimpered strangely. Sitting on the edge of the bed opposite Christian, she had an icy stare and went on whimpering. One could scarcely hear her words. "He don't touch a person's hand," she whispered. Barefoot, in her long night-dress, with bowed back she crawled to the oven, crouched down beside it, hid her head in her hands and howled.

With increasing astonishment Christian had observed her

behaviour. The kitten had snuggled into his hands and purred and thrust her rosy little nozzle against his breast. This awakened a sense of pleasure in him such as he had not felt for long, and he wished secretly that he could be alone with the little beast and play with it. But Karen's doings horrified him. He got up, carrying the kitten with him, and went to Karen and kneeled down beside her. He asked her what ailed her, and begged her to return to bed. She paid no attention to his words, but writhed there on the floor and howled.

And it was chaos that was howling there.

IX

Among the boon companions of Niels Heinrich Engelschall was Joachim Heinzen, the son of the crippled machinist. The fellow was a simpleton. His indiscriminate pursuit of every woman subjected him to malicious practical jokes. Since, on account of his absurdity, no woman wanted to be seen with him, he was gradually obsessed by a silent rage which made him really dangerous, although his original nature had been kindly enough.

Among other women, the one called Red Hetty had attracted him. He followed her in the dark streets; in public houses he sat near her and stared. She mocked at his attempts to become friendly with her. Moreover, so long as she was the mistress of Niels Heinrich, he dared to undertake nothing further, and his interest seemed gradually to subside. When Niels Heinrich, however, had cast the woman off, Heinzen began to pursue her again, but his efforts were fruitless.

But Niels Heinrich himself came to his aid, and promised to help him for a certain sum. Joachim Heinzen hesitated to risk so much. At last they agreed that half of the price was to be paid at once, the other half later and in instalments. Red Hetty, badly frightened by Niels Heinrich, became friendlier with Joachim; but after her breach with her former

lover she got drunk daily, and made fearful and disgusting scenes. Joachim declared that Niels had cheated him, refused to pay the instalments, and demanded the return of his original fifty marks. Thus a quarrel arose.

Niels Heinrich did not fear the simpleton, and it would have been easy for him to rid himself of the fellow. But since he had unbounded influence over Joachim and had found him a useful tool on many occasions, he did not want a definite breach, and sought ways and means of soothing him. He flattered him by his attentions, permitted him to be his neighbour in public places, and took his part in quarrels and fights. Something loathsome and frightful was gathering gradually in his brain. Dark plans employed his mind, though they had taken yet no definite shape or form. He chose his creature, though he knew not yet what for. But he did know that Joachim could be used for all things, no matter how infamous, and had nevertheless a degree of inner innocence. Perhaps a plan, with which his thoughts played only cynically and indefinitely, gained form and certainty from the simpleton's slavish devotion. Perhaps it fired him, gave him courage, and stung his imagination to enter the abyss of the unspeakable.

He assured Joachim that Red Hetty didn't amount to much, that she was a withered drab and a stinking carrion. He might have others, if he would only open his eyes. There were some that made a fellow's mouth water; a count would be glad of 'em. In such and such places there were some—ah, that was different. The poor fool asked where and who. Then Niels Heinrich gave an evil chuckle, and said he was thinking of a Jewess. You had to see her, that was all! Like a peeled egg. Firm on her legs. Not too fat, not too lean. Eyes like the Irishwoman's in the pub. Hair like the tail of a race-horse. Ready to bite. Ah! "Hold on now," Joachim Heinzen answered, taken aback. "Hold on!"

It gave Niels Heinrich a bitter pleasure to tell the fellow of the girl over and over again. He filled him with the

image and goaded his senses. He directed all the idiot's desires upon a being he had not even seen. But also he described her for his own benefit, and heightened and stung his own appetites, and made himself impatient and jeered at himself in order to test the possibility of their realization by his rage over the apparently unattainable products of his fancy. He took Joachim with him to Stolpische Street, and they lay in wait for Ruth's home-coming. Then he showed her to him, and they followed her up the stairs. Ruth felt nervous and frightened.

It so happened that at this time a fellow student called her attention to the curious healings accomplished by old Heinzen. When she went there she did not know, of course, that it was Joachim Heinzen who had followed her, nor did she recognize him when she saw him in the room. But his stupid, steady glare disquieted her.

In great excitement Joachim announced to his patron that he had seen the Jewess, whom he already regarded as his property, in his father's flat. "That's rot," said Niels Heinrich coldly. He had before this jeered venomously at the cures old Heinzen performed. He repeated that jeer now, and added that if the Jewess had gone to the old man's, there was no doubt but that she had done so because she had taken a liking to Joachim. The fellow grinned. In the drinking den where they spent many of their nights, Niels Heinrich had craftily arranged that the prospective affair of Joachim and the Jewess should be frequently discussed and commented. Joachim did not know that he and his affair were a joke. He took Niels Heinrich aside, and asked how he could get at the girl most quickly. Niels Heinrich looked at him mockingly, and told him he had better put off all attempts for a while yet; this was a matter in which one had to proceed cleverly; the Jewess was distrustful, and was furthermore one of those new-fangled student wenches. You couldn't go at her with a club; you had to be elegant and considerate. But the

simpleton was not to be persuaded. He said he wanted to go to her and invite her to a ball on the following Sunday. Niels Heinrich laughed uproariously. "I guess you're crazy," he said. "Your head must've gone addled." He paled and laughed anew, and said: "You got to wait and see. I'll lay ten to one the girl will turn up at your old man's pretty soon. I'll have some one watching, and you stay home so you don't miss her."

He slapped Joachim's shoulder. He stood there like a pole —lean, dry, pointed. In the embankment on the road to Weissensee the wheels of an express train thundered on the rails.

X

Ruth and Christian entered a dim, stuffy room. The door to the little hall was open, as well as the door to the adjoining room. There were a good many people in the flat. Careless of all these strangers, Mother Heinzen sat at her table and pared potatoes. The table was covered with innumerable things—files, boxes, ink-bottles, even a pair of shoes. In the background, at a second table which was as narrow as a carpenter's bench, Joachim and an apprentice were making metal stoppers with a hand machine. Old Heinzen leaned in a wicker chair. A shabby black cloth hid the lower part of his body and concealed its mutilation. His lean and almost rigid face, with its thick, inflamed lids, its yellowish beard, and its sharp, straight nose, expressed no inner participation in what went on around him.

A few whispering women stood nearest to him. A little beyond there was a group consisting of a sergeant, a journeyman butcher with a blood-stained apron and naked arms, a salvation army lass with blue spectacles, and the porter of a business house in a fancy uniform. Behind Christian and Ruth appeared a man whose head was swathed in bandages, another who looked frightened as he leaned on his crutches,

and a woman whose face was a mass of repulsive sores. Other figures emerged gradually into that narrow circle.

While no one dared yet to approach the miracle worker, a woman rushed panting and moaning into the room. In her arms she carried a child between three and four years old. The child's face was like lead, its eyes were convulsively turned outward, and its neck and limbs were unnaturally contorted. The woman was trembling all over, and seemed not to know where to turn, so Ruth took the child from her and carried it to old Heinzen. The people willingly made way for her. On her face was a radiance of sweet serviceableness.

Joachim Heinzen got up. The apprentice poured a mass of finished stoppers into a basket filled with saw-dust, and shook the stoppers down. Joachim, his arms akimbo, approached his father's chair, and devoured Ruth with his eyes. His mouth was open, his head craned forward, his whole person quivered with excitement. Ruth held the child out toward old Heinzen, and spoke words that could not be heard for the rattle of the metal stoppers. Joachim made a threatening gesture toward the apprentice, who stopped the noise.

Old Heinzen opened his eyes and raised his right arm. This was his miraculous gesture, and a silence fell upon the room. Christian watched the devotion, the utter loving-kindness with which Ruth held out the epileptic child to the stricken man. Her grace pierced him, and he asked himself with amazement: "Does she believe in it? Is it possible to believe in such things?" But even as his amazement increased, there seemed to arise in him the presentiment of something unknown and incomprehensible; and as often before in moments of extraordinary feeling, he had to fight down a secret desire to laugh.

Suddenly Heinzen dropped the raised arm. He seemed confused. He moved his head and shoulders, and said wearily: "I can do nothing to-day. There's somebody here who takes my power from me. I can do nothing."

His words made a deep impression, and all eyes sought the disturber. They glided from one to another. Heads turned and pupils shifted. Before a minute had passed the eyes of all the people in the room were fixed on Christian. Even Mother Heinzen had stopped paring the potatoes and had arisen and was staring at him.

Christian had heard Heinzen's words. What did those glances demand of him? What was their meaning? What did they desire? Were they angry? Was there something in him or about him that affronted or disturbed them? Yet they seemed timid and wondering rather than hostile. That old seal of his silence, his equivocal little smile, hovered about his lips. He looked up as though asking for help, and his eyes met Ruth's; and in her eyes he saw that radiant understanding, that silvery, spiritual love that animated her wholly and at all times.

The mother of the child uttered a cry. "How do you mean —takes your power? Pull yourself together, old man, for God's sake!"

"I can't say nothing different," murmured Heinzen. "There's somebody here that takes my power away."

"And has he got the power?" the Salvationist cried shrilly.

"I don't know," Heinzen answered, in an oppressed manner. "Maybe, but I don't know."

Slowly Christian went up to Ruth, who was still holding the child in her arms, and bent over and gazed at the apparently lifeless form. At once the epileptic rigour relaxed, flecks of foam appeared on the child's lips, and it began to weep softly.

The emotion that passed through the room was like a great sigh.

But noises from without broke in upon the silence here. Laughter and curses had been heard a while before. Now the sounds came nearer, and Niels Heinrich and Red Hetty appeared in the doorway.

He tugged the woman into the room. She reeled drunkenly, waved her arms, and laughed shrilly. Pushed forward by Niels Heinrich, she stretched out her fingers for some support; but the people whom she touched drew back in vexation. Niels Heinrich caught her by the shoulders, and shoved her at Joachim Heinzen. He chuckled as he did so, and the noise he made was like the clucking of a hen. Joachim was scared, and gazed stupidly and angrily at the wild looking creature. She wound her arms about his neck and clung to him and babbled drunkenly. Her black, wide-brimmed hat, with its huge green feather, slipped grotesquely to the back of her head. Joachim tried to shake her off, fixing his half-crazed eyes on Ruth. But as the woman clung the more tenaciously, he struck her a blow full in the breast, so that she fell to the floor with a moan and lay there in an absurd posture.

People hurried to and fro protesting. A few bent over the drunken woman, who at once began to hiccough and babble again. Others threatened Joachim with their fists. Mother Heinzen tried to calm the tumult, Ruth sought refuge near Christian and took his hand. Then an uncanny thing happened. Joachim Heinzen grasped her arm, and pulled her roughly toward him. Perhaps it was a weak-minded jealousy that impelled him, or else a brutal and stupid attempt to convince her that he cared nothing for Red Hetty and was guiltless of the incident. With glassy eyes he stared at Ruth; a vicious grin was on his face. Ruth gave a soft cry, held up her hand to shield herself, and struggled gently. Her lids were lowered. Her attitude went to Christian's heart. He went up to the fellow, and said very quietly: "Let her go." Joachim hesitated. "Let her go," Christian repeated, without raising his voice. Joachim obeyed and snorted.

Niels Heinrich seemed to be immensely entertained by it all. He urged those about him to watch what was going on, laughed his clucking laugh, and sought to encourage the simpleton. "Go ahead, Joachim," he cried. "You got to take

what you want! " But while he laughed and goaded Joachim on, his brows remained knit, and the upper part of his face seemed rigid with some horror. He had recently grown a little, pointed, goat-like beard which had a reddish colour. When he spoke or laughed it moved stiffly up and down, and gave his head the appearance of a marionette's.

When he saw that Christian had restrained Joachim's impudent roughness, he came and stood before him, and said in an insolent, knife-like voice: " Mornin'. I should think you'd know me."

" I do," Christian answered courteously.

" An' I said good mornin' to you! " Niels Heinrich said, with an unconcealed jeer. His little beard twitched. The horror seemed to spread over his whole face.

" Good evening," said Christian courteously.

Niels Heinrich gritted his teeth. " Mornin'! " he yelled, livid with rage. All those present gave a start and became silent.

Christian looked at him quietly. Then he turned quite deliberately to Ruth, and said: " Let us go, little Ruth." With the bow of a man of the world he let her precede him. He also bowed courteously to those about him. He might have been leaving a drawing-room.

Niels Heinrich, bent far forward, stared after him. He clenched his fist, and went through the pantomime of pulling a cork-screw out of a bottle.

XI

" Were you frightened? " Christian asked, when they were in the street.

" A little," Ruth answered. She smiled, but she was still trembling.

They did not turn homeward. They walked in the opposite direction and passed through many streets. Christian walked

swiftly, and Ruth had difficulty in keeping up with him. A sharp wind blew, and her shabby little cloak fluttered.

"Are you cold?" Christian asked. She said "No." A cloud of yellow leaves whirled up in front of them; and Christian strode on and on.

"The stars are coming out," he said, and looked fleetingly at the sky.

They came to a wide, desolate street. A line of arc-lamps seemed to stretch into infinity, but the houses looked empty.

They walked on and on.

"Say something," Ruth begged. "Tell me something about yourself. Just this once. Just to-day."

"There's little good to be told about myself," he said into the wind.

"Whether it's good or not, I'd like to know it."

"But what?"

"Anything."

"I must think. I have a poor memory for my own experiences." But even as he spoke there emerged the memory of a night which he had thought quite faded. What had happened then seemed menacing now, and seemed in some mysterious way related to Ruth; and the need of confession came upon him like hunger.

"Don't search in your mind," said Ruth. "Tell what happens to occur to you."

He walked more slowly. Poor in words as he was, he strove first to gather the bare facts in his mind.

Ruth smiled and urged him. "Just start. The first word is the hardest."

"Yes, that is true," he agreed.

"Did the thing you're thinking of happen long ago?"

"You are right," he said. "I am thinking of something definite. You have clear perceptions." He was surprised. "It's four years ago. I was motoring with two friends in the

south of Italy." He hesitated. The words were so lame. But the lovely compulsion of Ruth's glances drew them from their hiding-places, and they gradually came forth more willingly.

On a beautiful day of May he and his friends had reached the city of Acquapendente in the Abruzzi. They had really intended to proceed to Viterbo, but the little mountain town pleased his friends, and they persuaded him to stay. He stopped in his story. "I seemed always to want to race from one spot to another," he said. His friends kept on urging him, but when they stopped in front of the inn, it seemed so dirty that he hated to think of passing the night there. At that moment there came down the steps of the near-by church a girl of such majestic loveliness as he had never seen before; and that vision determined him to stay. The innkeeper, when he was asked who the girl was, pronounced her name full of respect. She was the daughter of a stone-mason named Pratti. Christian bade the innkeeper get ready a supper and invite Angiolina Pratti to it. The innkeeper refused. Thereupon Christian bade him invite the girl's father, and this the man agreed to do. His friends sought to dissuade Christian, telling him that the women of this land were shy and proud, and that their favours were not easily won. He would, at least, have to go about the business more delicately than he was doing. Christian laughed at them. They reasoned and argued, so that finally he grew stubborn, and declared to them that he would bring about what they held to be quite impossible—that he would accomplish it without artfulness or adroitness or exertion, but simply through his knowledge of the character of these people.

The girl's father came to wait upon the foreign gentlemen. He had white hair and a white beard and a noble demeanour. Christian approached and addressed him. He said that it would give him and his friends pleasure if the Signorina Pratti would sup with them. Pratti wrinkled his forehead and

expressed his astonishment. He had not, he said, the honour of the gentlemen's acquaintance. Christian looked sharply into his eyes, and asked for how much money he would, that evening at eight, conduct his daughter Angiolina naked into their room and to their table. Pratti stepped back and gasped. His eyes rolled in his head, and Christian's friends were frightened. Christian said to the old man: "We are perfectly decent. You may depend on our discretion. We desire merely to admire the girl's beauty." With wildly raised arms Pratti started to rush at him. But he was prepared for that, and said: "Will five thousand suffice?" The Italian stopped. "Or ten thousand?" And he took ten bank notes of a thousand lire each out of his wallet. The Italian grew pale and tottered. "Twelve thousand?" Christian asked. He saw that the sum represented an inconceivable treasure to the old man; in a long life of toil he had never had so much. The perception increased Christian's madness, and he offered fifteen thousand. Pratti opened his lips, and sighed: "Oh, Signore." The sound should have touched him, Christian said to Ruth. But nothing touched him in those days; all that he cared for was to have his will. The man took the money, and went away falteringly.

That evening the young men took their places at the charmingly arranged table in some suspense. The innkeeper had brought forth old silver vessels and cut-glass goblets. Roses were placed in vases of copper, and thick candles had been lit. The room was like one in a castle. Eight o'clock came, and then a quarter past eight. The conversation lagged; they gazed at the door. Christian had commanded the innkeeper not to appear until he was summoned, so that the promised discretion should be observed. At last, at half-past eight, old Pratti appeared carrying his daughter in his arms. He had wrapped her in a cloak. He beckoned the young men to close the doors. When they had done so, he pulled the cloak away and they beheld the naked body of the beautiful

girl. Her hands and feet were fettered. Her father placed her on the empty chair beside Christian. Her eyes were closed; she was asleep. But it was no natural sleep; she had been drugged, probably with the juice of poppies. Pratti bowed and left.

The three friends looked at that lovely form, the gently inclined head, the rosy face, the streaming hair. But their triumph and arrogant delight had died within them. One went into the bed-room, fetched a coverlet, and covered the girl with it; and Christian was grateful to him for the action. Hastily they ate a few bites; the wine remained untouched. Then they went down, paid their reckoning, summoned their chauffeur, and drove through the night along the road to Rome. No one spoke during the drive; none of them ever mentioned Angiolina Pratti later. But Christian found it difficult to escape the picture in his mind—the fettered, drugged girl alone in the room with the roses and the yellow candle-light. But at last he forgot, for so many other images crowded the old one out. "But just now," he said, "as we left the house, that image was as clear to me as it was that day in Acquapendente. I had to keep thinking of it, I don't know why."

"How strange," Ruth whispered.

They walked on and on.

"Where are we going?" Ruth asked.

Christian looked at her. "What is so strange? That I told you about it? It really seemed superfluous, quite as though you knew it without being told."

"Yes," she admitted shyly. "I often seem to stand within your soul as within a flame."

"It is brave of you to say a thing like that." He disliked swelling words, but this thing moved him.

"You must not be so ashamed," she whispered.

He answered: "If I could talk like other people, much would be spared me."

"Spared you? Would you be a niggard of yourself? Then it would no longer be you. That's not the question. One should be a spendthrift of oneself—give oneself without stint or measure."

"Where have you learned to make such judgments, Ruth? To see and feel and know, and to have the courage of your vision?"

"I'd like to tell you about something too," said Ruth.

"Yes, tell me something about yourself."

"About myself? I don't think I can do that. But I will tell you about some one to whom I felt very close. It was a sister; no bodily sister, for I haven't one. The reason I said 'strange' just now was because this Angiolina Pratti seemed like a sister to me too. Suddenly there seemed to be three sisters: Angiolina and I and the one I shall tell you about. It is a rather sad story. At least, it is at first. Afterwards it is no longer quite so sad. Oh, life is so wonderful and so deeply moving and so rich and so full of power!"

"Ruth, little Ruth," said Christian.

Then she told her story. "There was a little girl, a child. She lived with her parents at Slonsk, far in the eastern part of the country. Five years have gone since it all happened. Her father was very poor; he was assistant bookkeeper in a cotton mill, but he was so poorly paid that he could hardly scrape together the rent of their wretched dwelling. His wife had been ailing for long. Sorrow over their failure and suffering had robbed her of strength, and in the winter she died. These people were the only Jews in Slonsk, and in order to bury the body they had to take it to the nearest Jewish cemetery at Inowraztlaw. Since no railroad connects the towns, they had to use a wagon. So at seven o'clock in the morning—it was toward the end of December—the wagon came, and the coffin with the mother's body was lifted on it. The father and the brother and the little girl followed on foot. The girl was

eleven years old and the boy eight and a half. Thick flakes of snow fell, and soon the road had disappeared, and you could tell it only from the line of trees on either hand.

"It was still dark when they started, and even when day came there was only a murky twilight. The girl was unbearably sad, and her sadness increased at every step. When day had fully come, a dim, misty day, the crows flew thither from all directions. It may be that the body in the coffin brought them. But the girl had never seen so many; they seemed to pour from the sky. On great black wings they flew back and forth, and croaked uncannily through the icy, murky silence. And the girl's sadness became so great that she wished to die. She lagged behind a little, and neither her father nor her brother noticed it in the snow-flurries, nor yet the man who led the horses. So she crossed a field to a wood, and there she sat down and made up her mind to die. Soon her senses were numbed.

"But an old peasant, who had been gathering wood, came from among the trees, and when he saw her and perceived that she did not move and was asleep, he first looked at her a while, and then he started to strip her body of all she had, her cloak, her shoes, her dress, her stockings, and even her shift; for the peasants are very poor thereabouts. She could not resist. She felt what was happening only as from the depth of a dream. So the peasant made a little bundle of her things, and left her naked body there as dead and limped away. He marched along for a while, and came upon the wagon with the coffin and the two men and the boy. The wagon had stopped, for the child had been missed. On the edge of the road a crucifix had been set up, and that was the first thing that gave the peasant pause. It did not seem to him to be chance that Christ was standing there beside the wagon with the coffin. He confessed that later. Also he saw the hundreds of crows that croaked wildly and hungrily, and he was frightened. Then he saw how desperate the father

was, and that he was preparing to turn back and gazed in all directions and tried to halloo through the mist.

"The peasant's conscience began to burn. He fell on his knees before the cross and prayed. The father asked him whether he had seen the child. He pointed and wanted to run away, and he did run across the fields. But something within him forced him to run to the very spot where he had robbed and abandoned the girl. He lifted her in his arms, wrapped his coat about her, and held her to his breast. The father had followed and received the child, and did not ask why she was naked and bare. They rubbed her skin so long with snow till she was warm and opened her eyes. Then the peasant kissed her forehead, and made the sign of the cross over the Jewish child. The father rebuked him for that, but the peasant said: 'Forgive me, brother,' and he kissed his hand. From that time on no sadness of the old kind ever came to the girl again. She had only a very faint recollection of the moment when the peasant wrapped her in his coat and held her to his breast. But I believe that she was born again in that moment, born better and stronger than she had been before."

"Ruth, little Ruth," said Christian.

"And perhaps Angiolina, that other sister of mine, also awakened to a happier life from that hour of dimness and of death."

Christian did not answer. He felt as though a light were walking by his side.

At a corner of that desolate street they came upon a very brilliant show-window. They went up to it and stopped as by a common impulse. The shop had long been closed, but in the window was draped a magnificent coat of Russian sable, a symbol of wealth and warmth and adornment. Christian turned to Ruth, and saw the threadbare little cloak in which she shivered. And he saw that she was poor. Then it came into his mind that he too was poor, poor like her, and ir-

revocably so. He smiled, for the fact seemed significant to him, and he felt a joy that was secret and almost ecstatic.

XII

Johanna Schöntag's first visit to Voss passed off in a very commonplace manner. Trying to let him forget that she was a young lady made her more and more conventional. To hide her embarrassment, she was half capricious and half critical in mood. It amused her that there was a rocking-chair in the room. "It reminds one of one's grandmother," she said, "and gives one an anachronistic and homelike feeling." Then she sat down in it and rocked, took candied fruits from her little beaded bag and crushed them on her tongue, which gave her a comical and pouting expression.

On the table there was a tea-urn, two cups, and plates with pastry. Voss's demeanour seemed to say that narrow means did not prevent one from entertaining properly. It amused Johanna. She thought to herself: "If he brings out a photograph album with pictures of himself as a child, I shall giggle right into his face." And at the same time her heart throbbed with quite other fears.

Voss spoke of his loneliness. He alluded to experiences of his own that had made him shy. There were people, he said, who seemed fated to suffer shipwreck in all matters where their hearts were involved. They had to grow calluses of the soul. He was busy doing that. He had never had a friend, though the illusion of friendship often enough. To realize the futility of some great longing was bitterer than to discover the insufficiency of a human being.

Johanna's secret fears grew as she heard him wax sentimental. She said: "This rocking-chair is the nicest thing I've come across for long. It gives me a queer, pleasant little seasickness. Are you sure the people under you won't believe that you've become a father and are rocking your offspring

to sleep?" She laughed and left the chair. Then she drank tea and nibbled at a piece of pastry, and quite suddenly said good-bye and left him.

Voss gritted his teeth. His hand was as empty as before. He took a piece of soft cake, formed it into the rude image of a girl, and pierced it with the pin that Christian had given him. The room still held the faint aroma of a woman's body and garments and clothes and hair. He rocked the empty chair, and talked to an invisible person who was leaning back in it and coquettishly withdrew from his glance. For a while he worked. Then his work wearied him, and his thoughts were busy laying snares.

All he did and thought showed the sincerity of his feeling of loneliness. His soul exuded poisonous fumes.

He opened a drawer of his desk, and took out the letters of the unknown lady who had signed herself F. He read them through, and then took pen and paper and began to copy them. He copied them word for word, but whenever Christian's name occurred he substituted dots for it. There were twenty-three of these letters, and when he had finished dawn was rising.

He slept a few hours, and then wrote to Johanna as follows: "I propose this riddle to you: Who is F. and who is the thief and robber who took French leave with such a treasure of enthusiasm and devotion? Perhaps it is only a product of my fancy or a by-product of my morbid imagination. I leave you to guess. Has there been an attempt here to substitute a magnificent invention for the unromantic sobriety of real life, or did this rare and miraculous thing really form a part of human experience? It seems to me that something in the modulation and tone-colour, something subtle but unmistakable, points to the latter conclusion. Where is the man who could invent such pain and such delight? Who would have the courage to represent the life of the senses as so blended of shamelessness and of a primal innocence?

Compared to such an one our most vaunted poets would be the merest tyros. I have, of course, never admired poets inordinately. They falsify appearances, and, in the last analysis, they are but rationalists in whose hands our dreams become transparent and two-dimensional. There is a verbal veraciousness which is as penetrating as the glow of living flesh. Here is an example of it. It is a miracle to be adored, a thing of envy to all hungry souls. It is life itself, and since it is life, where are the living two that begot it? She, the marvellous author of the letters, is probably dead—consumed in the glow of her own soul. Her very shadow bears the stigmata of doom. But her ecstatic pen paints the picture of him whom she loved. I know him, we both know him. He stands at the gate of the penitents, and offers for old debts a payment that no one wants. To love as she loved is like worship; to be so loved and not to value it, to let its evidence rot in the dust of a library—that is a sin which nothing can wipe out. If one whom God himself pampered spews the food of angels out of his mouth, nothing but carrion remains for the stepchildren of fate. And yet we know: not wholly hopeless is the cry of the blood's need. Come to me soon; I have much to ask you and to say to you. I was like stone yesterday; the happiness of your presence drugged me. I shall be waiting for you. Each day I shall be at home at five o'clock and wait for you for three hours. Is there not some compulsion in that? When would you like to see Wahnschaffe? I shall tell him and arrange the meeting."

Johanna felt the same consternation this time that she had felt months before when Voss had written her in Christian's stead. First she thought he had perpetrated a hoax. But when she read the letters she was convinced of their authenticity and deeply moved. Voss's indications left no doubt as to their origin; again he had stolen another's secret in order to make use of it. His motives seemed inexplicable to her. But she promised herself not to see him again, whatever hap-

pened. The very thought of him made her freeze. The morbid and heated hatred of Christian which he always manifested made her reconsider. At moments she nursed the flattering delusion that she might be the means of saving Christian from a great danger. And yet, somehow, the man himself exerted the stronger lure. There was a will in him! A strange temptation—to feel the compulsion of an alien will! Whither would it lead?

Thus when, against her determination and her better instinct, she entered the house on Ansbacher Street once more, she said to herself: "O Rumpelstiltzkin, I'm afraid you're rushing into destruction. But run on and be destroyed. Then, at least, something will have happened."

She carried the letters back to him. She asked coldly what had been his intention in sending them. She feigned not to hear his answer that his letter had explained his intention. She refused to sit down. Voss tried to find a subject of conversation; he walked up and down before her like a sentinel. In her mind she passed caustic comments on him; she observed the negligence of his clothes, and thought his way of swinging on his heel and suddenly rubbing his hands absurd. Everything about him seemed silly and comical to her. She mocked at him to herself: "A schoolmaster who has gone a little crazy."

He told her he had made up his mind to move to Zehlendorf. Out there he had found a peaceful attic room in a villa. He felt the need of trees and fields, at least of their odour. In the morning he would ride in to attend lectures and in the afternoon return. Even if this plan could not be carried out daily, yet he would have the consolation of knowing that he had a refuge beyond this stony pandemonium which tasted of maltreated minds and of ink. He would move in two weeks.

"All the better." The words slipped out before Johanna was aware.

"What do you mean by that?" he asked, with a cattish

look. Then he laughed, and his laughter sounded like the clashing of shards. "Ah," he said, and stopped, "do you really think the distance will make any difference? You will come to me, I assure you; and you will come not only when I summon you, but of your own impulse. So please don't cling to a delusive hope."

Johanna had no answer ready. His insolence shook her self-control. Voss laughed again, and took no notice of the impression made by his words. He spoke of the progress of his studies: he had worked for two semesters, and was as far advanced as others at the end of six. The professors were saying excellent things of him. He considered all that part of medical knowledge that could be directly acquired mere child's play. No man of normal mind and decent industry should need more than eighteen months to master it. After that, to be sure, the paths divided. On one were artisans, dilettanti, mere professionals, and charlatans; on the other were great brains and spirits, pioneers and illustrious discoverers. At first surgery had attracted him, but that attraction had been brief. It was the merest butchery. He would refuse to depend wholly on knife and saw, and at all crucial moments of practice to submit to the dictates of a professional diagnostician, with nothing left him but whether the butcher would turn out to be an executioner or not. What attracted him inordinately was psychiatry. In it mystery was heaped on mystery. Unexplored and undiscovered countries stretched out there—great epidemics of the soul, illnesses of the sexes, deep-rooted maladies of whole nations, a ghostly chase between heaven and earth, new proofs of psychical bonds that stretched from millennium to millennium as well as from man to man, the discovery of whose nature would make the whole structure of science totter.

Johanna was repelled. One couldn't go much further in the way of boasting. His voice, which constantly passed from falsetto to bass, like a young bird thudding awkwardly between

two walls, gave her a physical pain. She murmured a polite formula of agreement, and gave him her hand in farewell. Even this she hated to do.

"Stay!" he said commandingly.

She threw back her head and looked at him in astonishment.

Now he begged. "Do stay! You always leave in such a mood that the minute you are outside I'm tempted to hang myself."

Johanna changed colour and wrinkled her childlike forehead. "Will you kindly tell me what you want of me?"

"That is a question of remarkably—shall we call it innocent frankness? What I want would seem to be sufficiently clear. Or can you accuse me of a lack of plain speaking? Am I a very deft and crafty wooer? I should rather expect you to reprove me for my impetuousness; that would be reasonable. But I cannot play at games; I have no skill in sinuous approaches. I cannot symbolize my feelings through flowers, nor have I learned to set springes of words or feign a bait upon the waters or make sweetish speeches. If I could do these things I might be more certain of reaching my goal. But I have no time; my time is limited, Fräulein Johanna. My life is crystallizing to a catastrophic point. Its great decision is at hand!"

"Your frankness leaves nothing to be desired," Johanna replied, and looked coolly and firmly into his eyes. She waited for a few seconds; then she asked, with a forced smile, concealing both her dread and her curiosity: "And why am I the arbiter in that great decision? What qualities have attracted your attention toward me? To what virtue or to what vice do I owe such an honour?" Awaiting his reply, she all but closed her eyes; and that gave her face a melting charm. She knew the danger of such coquettishness, but the abysses lured her.

But to Amadeus Voss she was exactly what she seemed to

be. He gazed ecstatically at her face, and asked: "May I be frank?"

"You frighten me. Can one be more so than you have already been?"

"You see—it is your race. It is, I do not deny it, the same race which I have always . . . Well, it's speaking mildly to say that I've always hated the Jews. Merely to scent a Jew was always to me like having an explosive stuck into my nerves. An immemorial crime is symbolized there, an ancient guilt; the Crucified One sighs across lands and ages to my ear. My blood rebels against the noblest of your race. It may be that I am the tool of an age-long lie; it may be that he who lacks the love that makes a priest acquires the stupidity and intolerance that mark the parson; it may be that our apparent enemies shall prove at last to be our brothers, and that Cain and Abel will clasp hands on Judgment Day. But it is part of my very being to nourish hatred when the roots of my life under the earth beyond my reach are crippled by the insolent growth of alien seedlings. And when one proposes to be my comrade and my neighbour, and yet meets me with the reserve of an alien soul—am I not to feel it and not to pay him back in the same coin? That is the way I've always felt. I never before knew a Jewish woman; and I cannot say that my feeling has undergone any essential change. Had it done so, I should suffer less. Oh, you are quite right to despise me on account of what I am saying; and, indeed, I am prepared to hear your contempt often. That is a part of my suffering. The first time I saw you I thought at once of Jephtha's daughter. She was, you remember, sacrificed by her father, because she happened to be the first to welcome him on his return home; for he had made a vow, and his daughter came to meet him with cymbals and with dancing. It is a profound notion—that notion of sacrificing the first one who comes to bid you welcome. And she must have been sweet and dainty—the daughter of Jephtha. She is to-day—ex-

perienced in dreams; rash where it is a matter of mere dreams; spoiled, incapable of any deed, submerging all enthusiasm and initiative in an exquisite yearning. The long wealth gathered by her ancestors has made her faint-hearted. She loves music and all that flatters the senses—delicate textures and beautiful words. She loves also the things that arouse and sting, but they must neither burden nor bind her. She loves the shiver of fear and of small intoxications; she loves to be tempted, to challenge fate, to put her little hand into the tiger's cage. But everything within her is delicate and in transition toward something—blossoming or decay. She is sensitive, without resistance, weary, and so full of subtle knowledge and various gropings that each desire in her negates another. Inbreeding has curdled her blood, and even when she laughs her face is touched with pain. And one day her father Jephtha, Judge in Israel, returns home and sacrifices her. Oh, I am sure he went mad after that."

Johanna's face was as pale as death. "That, I suppose, was a lesson in your admired science of psychiatry?" She forced herself to mockery.

Voss did not answer.

"Good-bye, you learned man." She walked to the door.

Voss followed her. "When are you coming again?" he asked softly.

She shook her head.

"When are you coming again?"

"Don't torment me."

"Wahnschaffe will be here the day after to-morrow. Will you come?"

"I don't know."

"Johanna, will you come?" He stood before her with uplifted hands, and the muscles of his cheeks and temples twitched.

"I don't know." She went out.

But he knew that she would come.

XIII

Between the acts of a dress rehearsal Lorm and Emanuel Herbst walked up and down in the foyer, discussing Lorm's rôle. "Hold yourself a little more in reserve." Herbst talked slightly through his nose. "And at the climax of the second act I expected a somewhat stronger emphasis. There's nothing else to criticize."

"Very well," said Lorm drily. "I'll stick on a little more grease-paint."

Many of the invited guests also walked through the curved passage way. Admiring glances followed Lorm. A girl approached him determinedly. She had evidently struggled with herself. She handed him a bunch of carnations, and silently withdrew, frightened by her own temerity.

"How nice of you!" Lorm exclaimed with kindliness, and stuck his nose into the flowers.

"Well, you old reveller, do the broken hearts taste as well as ever?" Herbst asked mockingly. "One is served at breakfast, too, isn't it? Or more than one? It makes an old codger like me feel sad."

"You can get too much of a good thing," said Lorm. "The poor dears go to excesses. Yes, early in the morning one will be trying to bribe the house attendants. When my chauffeur appears they flutter about him. Many of them know how I've planned my day and turn up at unexpected places—in an art dealer's shop, at my photographer's studio. I've been told of one poor girl who spent nights promenading in front of the house. When I was on tour there was one who followed me from town to town. And then there are all those unhappy letters. The amount of feeling that goes to waste, the confessions that are made, the intricate problems that are presented—you would be astonished. And all make the same naïve presumptions. I shouldn't care very greatly if this whole business didn't have its serious aspect. All these

young creatures put their capital into an undertaking doomed to failure. It's bound to revenge itself. Clever people say that it doesn't matter what the young are enthusiastic about, if only they're enthusiastic about something. It isn't true. Decent young people shouldn't rave about an actor. Don't misunderstand me. I don't mean to belittle our profession; it has its definite merits. I don't want to display any false modesty about myself either. I know precisely what I am. The point is that those young people do not. They want me to be what I only represent. That is the height of absurdity. No, decent young people shouldn't adore an actor who is only a caricature of a hero."

"Well, well, well," said Emanuel Herbst, in a tone of soothing irony. "You're too severe and too pessimistic. I know a few rather authoritative persons who sincerely assign to you quite a high position among mortals. I'll not mention immortals in deference to your mood. And in your really lucid moments you're proud of your position, which is quite as it should be. What attitude does your wife take to your attacks of hypochondria? Doesn't she scold you?"

"It seems to me," Lorm said impassively, "that Judith has arrived on the other shore of her disillusion. In this dispute she would hardly take your side. My convictions have fallen on fertile ground in her case."

Emanuel Herbst rocked his head from side to side and protruded his nether lip. Lorm's tone made him anxious. "How is she anyhow?" he asked. "I haven't seen her for a long time. I heard she was ill."

"It's hard to say how she is," Lorm answered. "Ill? No, she wasn't ill, although she did spend a great deal of time in bed. There are a few middle-class women who've formed a kind of court about her. They give her all their time, and she's trained them marvellously. She says she's losing her slenderness, so she got a fashionable physician to prescribe a hunger cure. She follows the directions religiously.

But my house is in splendid condition. Tip-top. Why shouldn't it be? It's cleaned to the last corner twice a week. The cuisine is excellent, and I've got some rather nice things in my cellar. You must come and try them."

"All right, old man, you can count on me," said Emanuel Herbst. But his anxiety for his friend had grown with each word that Lorm had uttered. He knew that coldness which hid the most quivering sensitiveness, that princely smoothness beneath which great wounds were bleeding, that indeterminate element which was half spiritual malady, half an ascetic impulse. He was afraid of the destruction wrought by a worm in a noble fruit.

The signal sounded. A new act began. From the stage that voice of steel exerted its compelling resonance once more.

XIV

Johanna did come.

She had waited until it was quite late, in order to avoid waiting for Christian alone with Voss. When, after all, she found only Voss, she could not conceal her contempt. Her vexation made her face look old and peaked.

The weather was cold and wet. She sat down near the oven and put her hands against the tiles. She did not take off her coat. It was an ample, fur-trimmed garment with large buttons. She looked in it like a thin and hiding child. Nor did she raise her veil, which extended rather tautly from her wide-brimmed hat to her chin and accentuated the whiteness of her skin.

"You lied to me," she said harshly. "It was mere bait. You knew he wouldn't be here."

Voss answered: "What you have just said relegates me pretty clearly to a mere means to an end. What do you expect of a meeting with him anyhow? What is it to serve? Is it to revive memories or give the opportunity for an ex-

planation? No, I know you're not fond of explanations. You like tension, provided your way of escape is ready for you. Very clever. I am to be at once the opportunity and the way of escape. Very clever. But why don't you simply go to him? Because, of course, you don't want to assume the psychical obligation implied in such a step. It might look as though you meant something; you are not sure how it would be interpreted. Your cowardice is almost funny. When it's convenient, you're a sensitive plant; when it's not, you're quite capable of putting your heel on some defenceless neck."

"This is intolerable," Johanna cried, and arose. "Don't you know that my being here compromises me more, especially in my own eyes, than anything else I could do?"

Voss was frightened. "Calm yourself," he said, and touched her arm. Recoiling from his touch she sank back into her chair. "Calm yourself," Voss repeated. "He promised definitely to be here; but he has many errands nowadays and has to meet many people and is constantly on the way from one place to another."

Johanna tormented herself. She was an experienced expert at it. She was glad when things went ill with her, when her hopes failed, when she was insulted or misunderstood. She was glad when the silk stocking into which she slipped her foot tore, when ink dropped on her paper, when she missed a train or found something for which she had paid generously prove worthless. It was a bitter, mischievous gladness, such as one feels at the absurd downfall of a hated rival.

It was this feeling that made her smile now. "I'm a charming creature, am I not?" she said, with a bizarre look and gesture.

Voss was disconcerted.

"Tell me about him," she said, half-defiantly, half-resignedly, and again pressed her hands against the tiles.

Amadeus looked upon her hands, which were bluish with cold. "You are cold," he murmured. "You are always cold."

"Yes, I'm always cold. There's not enough sunshine for me."

"People say that foundlings never get really warm; but you are no foundling. I imagine, on the contrary, that your childhood was a hotbed of carefulness. Undoubtedly the rooms were overheated, and hot-water bottles were put into your bed at night, and tonics were prescribed. Yet your soul froze all the more as the attempt was made to reach it through material things. You are no foundling in the body; your bourgeois descent is clear. But your soul is probably a foundling soul. There are such souls. They flutter yearningly up and down in space between heaven and hell, and their fate depends on whether an angel or a demon assigns them their earthly tabernacle. Most of them get into the wrong bodies. They are so anxious for a mortal form that they usually fall into the hands of a demon to whom they are tributary all their lives. Such are the foundling souls."

"Fantastic nonsense!" Johanna said. "You had better tell me something about him."

"About him? As I told you before, he is concerned in many different things. The woman Karen is ill, and will probably not get better. It is her rightful reward; vice demands the payment of its debt. You can find the sword foretold for such in Scripture. Well, he nurses her; he watches with her at night. Then there is a Jewish girl who lives in the house. He goes about with her to all sorts of people—a kind of suburban saint. Only he doesn't preach; preaching is not among his gifts. He is dumb, and that is a blessing. I have never sat so near to a woman," he went on in precisely the same tone, so as to prevent her interrupting him, "never at least to one who makes me feel that her very existence is a good. And one is so damnably in need of something pure, so filled with terrible longing for a human eye—to know none other regards you as she does. Almighty God, to lose for once the curse of my isolation! What is it that I ask? It is

so little! Only not to sicken of my rage and famish of my thirst; once to lay my head into a woman's lap and feel nothing but the beloved night; and when the silence falls, to feel a hand in my hair and hear a word, a breath, and so to be redeemed! " His voice had grown softer and softer, and at last sank to a whisper.

" Don't . . . don't . . . don't," Johanna implored him, almost as softly. " Tell me about him," she went on hastily. " Does he really live in complete poverty? One hears so many things. Last week I was invited by some people, and the company talked of nothing else. Impudent and stupid as these parvenus of yesterday always are, they fairly outdid themselves. They joked about him and pitied his family, or even suggested that the whole thing was an imposture. My gorge rose. But I ask you this one thing: Why haven't I heard from you a single cordial word about him? Why nothing but venom and slander? You must know him. It is unthinkable that you really entertain the opinion of him by which you try to add to your self-importance in my eyes, and no doubt in the eyes of others. I assure you that there isn't the remotest chance of our really becoming friends, unless you're candid with me on this point."

For a long time Voss was silent. First he passed his handkerchief across his damp forehead. Then, bending far forward, he leaned his chin upon his folded hands, and looked upward through his glasses as though he were listening. " Friendship," he murmured in a sarcastic tone. " Friendship. I call that pouring water into the wine before the grapes have gone to the winepress." After a pause he spoke again. " I am not called to be his judge. At the beginning of our acquaintance it was given me to behold him with astonishment upon his pedestal. I kneeled in the mud and lifted my eyes as to a demigod. Then I kindled a little fire, and there was considerable smoke. But I would be a liar to assert that he did not stir me to the innermost soul. At times he so mastered

my evil and common instincts that when I was left alone I cast myself down and wept. But love surrounded him and hate surrounded me. Wherever he appeared love burst into bloom; whatever I touched turned upon me in hatred. Light and beauty and open hearts were about him; blackness and humiliation and blocked paths were my portion. All good spirits guarded him; I was fighting Satan, and out of my darkness crying to God, who cast me off. Ay, cast me off and rejected me, and set a mark of shame upon me, and pursued me ever more cruelly, as my self-humiliation deepened and my penitence grew tenser and my roots emerged more energetically from the earth. Then it came to pass that he recognized a brother in me. We passed an unforgettable night, and unforgettable words were exchanged between us. But love remained about him, and about me hate. He took my flame from me, and carried it to men; and love was about him, and about me was hate. He made a beggar of me, and gave me hundreds of thousands; and love was about him, and about me was hate. Do you think me so dull that I cannot measure his deeds or their heavy weight and cost? The consciousness of them steals into my sleep, and makes it terrible as an open wound, so that I lie as among stinging nettles without heaven or aspiration. Who would be so accursed a traitor to himself that he would neither hear nor see the truth when it roars like a flame of fire? But how about that brother in the dust? The contrast was easier to bear while he dwelt amid the splendours of the world. Now he goes and renounces, lives amid want and stench, nurses a woman of the streets and mingles with outcasts; and what is the result? Love grows about him like a mountain. It is necessary to have experienced and to have seen it. He comes into rooms out there, and all glances cling to him and touch him tenderly; and each creature seems fairer and better to itself while he is there. Is it magic? But that mountain of love crushes me where I lie."

Again he dried his forehead. Johanna observed him at-

tentively; at last an insight into his nature dawned in her.

"It is they who take the last step who are the chosen," Amadeus Voss continued. "Those like myself stop at the step before the last, and that is our purgatory. Perhaps Judas Iscariot could have done what the Master did, but the Master preceded him, and that doomed him to crime. He was alone. That is the solution of his mystery: he was alone. Just now, before you came, I was reading in a book the story of the marriage of Saint Francis to the Lady Poverty. Do you know it? 'Woe to him who is alone,' it says there. 'When he falls, he has no one to lift him up.'"

The book lay on the table. He took it up, and said: "Saint Francis had left the city, and met two old men. He asked them whether they could tell him the abode of Lady Poverty. Let me read you what the two old men answered."

He read aloud: "We have been here for a long time, and we have often seen her passing along this road. Sometimes she was accompanied by many, and often she returned alone without any companions, naked, devoid of dress and adornment, and surrounded only by a little cloud. And she wept very bitterly, and said: 'The sons of my mother have fought against me.' And we made answer: 'Have patience, for those who are good love thee.' And now we say to thee: Climb that high mountain among the holy hills which God has given her as a dwelling-place because He loves it more than all the dwelling-places of Jacob. The giants cannot approach its paths nor the eagles reach its peak. If thou wouldst go to her, strip off thy costly garments, and lay down every burden and every occasion of sin. For if thou art not stripped of these things, thou wilt never rise to her who dwells upon so great a height. But since she is kind of heart, they who love her see her without trouble, and they who seek her find her with ease. Think of her, brother, for they who yield themselves to her are safe. But take with thee faithful companions, with whom thou

mayest take counsel when thou climbest the mountain, and who may be thy helpers. For woe to him who is alone. When he falls he has no one to lift him up."

His manner of reading tormented Johanna. There was a fanaticism in it from which her soul, attuned to semitones, shrank.

"Woe to him who is alone," said Voss. He kneeled down before Johanna. All his limbs trembled. "Johanna," he implored her, "give me your hand, only your hand, and have pity on me."

Her will failed her. More in consternation than obedience, she gave him her hand, which he kissed with a devouring passion. What he did seemed blasphemous and desperate after his words and his reading; but she dared not withdraw her hand.

Her watchful ear caught a noise. "Some one is coming," she whispered faintly. Voss arose. There was a knock at the door, and Christian entered.

He greeted them in a friendly way. His calm contrasted almost resonantly with Amadeus's wild distraction, for Voss could not control himself wholly. While Christian sat down at the table with the lamplight full upon his face, and looked now at Johanna, now at Voss, the latter walked excitedly up and down, and said: "We have been talking about Saint Francis, Fräulein Johanna and I."

Christian looked his surprise.

"I know nothing of him," he said. "All I remember is that once in Paris, at Eva Sorel's, some verses about him were read. Every one was delighted, but I didn't like the poem. I have forgotten why, but I recall that Eva was very angry." He smiled. "Why did you two talk about Saint Francis?"

"We were talking of his poverty," replied Voss, "and of his marriage to the Lady Poverty, as the legend has it. And we agreed that such things must not be translated into actual

life, for the result would be falshood and misunderstanding. . . ."

"We agreed about nothing," Johanna interrupted him drily. "I am no support for any one's opinions."

"Never mind," said Voss, somewhat depressed. "It is a vision, a vision born of the sufferings of religious souls. That poverty, that sacred poverty is unthinkable except upon a Christian foundation. Whoever would dare to attempt it, and to turn backward the overwhelming stream of life in a distorted world, amid distorted conditions, where poverty means dirt and crime and degradation—such an one would only create evil and challenge humanity itself."

"That may be correct," said Christian. "But one must do what one considers right."

"It's cheap enough to take refuge in the purely personal when general questions are discussed," Voss said rancorously.

Johanna rose to say good-bye, and Christian prepared himself to follow her, since it was on her account that he had come. Voss said he would walk with them as far as Nollendorf Square. There he left them.

"It is hard for us to talk," said Christian. "There is much for which I should ask you to forgive me, dear Johanna."

"Oh," said Johanna, "it doesn't matter about me. I've conquered that. Unless I probe too deeply, even the pain is gone."

"And how do you live?"

"As best I can."

"You don't mind my calling you Johanna still, do you? Won't you come to see me some day? I'm usually at home in the evening. Then we could sit together and talk."

"Yes, I'll come," said Johanna, who felt her own embarrassment yielding before Christian's frank and simple tone.

While she was walking beside him and hearing and answering his direct and simple questions, all that had happened in

the past seemed a matter of course, and the present seemed harmonious enough. But when she was alone again she was as vexed with herself as ever; the nearest goal seemed as irrational as the farthest, and the world and life shut in by dreariness.

Two days later she went to Christian's dwelling. The wife of the night watchman Gisevius ushered her into Christian's room. Shivering and oppressed by the room, in which she could not imagine him, she waited for over an hour. Frau Gisevius advised her to look in at Karen Engelschall's or the Hofmanns' flat. To this she could not make up her mind. "I'll come again," she said.

When she stepped out into the street she saw Amadeus Voss. He greeted her without words, and his expression seemed to take it for granted that they had agreed to meet here. He walked on at her side.

"I love you, Johanna," he said.

She did not answer, nor turn her eyes toward him. She walked more swiftly, then more slowly, then more swiftly again.

"I love you, Johanna," said Amadeus Voss, and his teeth rattled.

XV

On the alabaster mantelshelf candles were burning in the silver Renaissance candlesticks. The more salient light of the burning logs reached only far enough to envelop the figures of Eva and of Cornelius Ermelang in its glow. It did not penetrate as far as the porphyry columns or the gold of the ceiling. A dim, red flicker danced in the tall mirrors, and the purple damask curtains before the huge windows, which shut in the room more solemnly than the great doors, absorbed the remnants of light without reflection.

The tea-gown of white lace which the dancer wore—experts declared each square inch of it to have the value of a pro-

vincial governor's annual pay—was vivid as a fantastic pastel on the side turned to the fire.

"You have been very kind to me," said Eva. "After you had been here so many times in vain, I was afraid you would leave without having seen me. But Susan probably told you how my days are spent. Men and happenings whirl through them so that I find it hard to retain a consciousness of my own self. Thus friends become estranged, and the faces about me change and I hardly notice it. A mad life!"

"Yet you summoned me in spite of that," Ermelang whispered, "and I have the happiness of being with you at last. Now I have attained everything that my stay in Russia promised. How shall I thank you? I have only my poor words." He looked at her with emotion, with a kind of ecstasy in his watery blue eyes. He had a habit of repeating the formula concerning his poor words; but despite the artifices of his speech, his feeling was genuine. Indeed, there was always a trifle too much feeling, too much soulfulness in his speech. Sometimes the impression arose that he was in reality not quite so deeply stirred, and that, if necessary, he could well limit his emotional expansion.

"What would one not do to please a poet?" Eva said with a courteous gesture. "It is pure selfishness too. I would have the image of me made perpetual in your mind. Both ancient and modern tyrants assure us that the only man whom they strove to please is the poet."

Ermelang said: "A being like you exists in so elemental a fashion that any image is as negligible in comparison as the shadow of a thing when the sun is at its zenith."

"You are subtle. Yet images persist. I have so great a faith in your vision that I should like you to tell me whether I am really so changed as those friends assert who knew me in my Parisian days. I laugh at them; but in my laughter there is a little rebellion of my vanity and a little fear of

withering and fading. Don't say anything; a contradiction would be trivial. Tell me, above all, how you came to be travelling in Russia, and what you have seen and heard and experienced."

"I have experienced very little. The total impression has been so unforgettable that details have faded into insignificance. Various difficulties made Paris unpleasant to me, and the Princess Valuyeff offered me a refuge on her estate near Petrograd. Now I must return to the West—to Europe, as the Russians mockingly say. And they are right. For I must leave my spiritual home-land, and people who were close to me, although I did not know them, and a loneliness full of melody and presage, and return to senseless noise and confusion and isolation. I have spoken to Tolstoi and to Pobiedonostzev; I have been to the fair at Nijni-Novgorod, and been driven across the steppe in a troika. And about all—the people and the landscape—there is a breath of innocence and of the times to come, of mystery and of power."

Eva had not listened very attentively. The hymns to Russia, intoned by wayfaring literary men and observers, began seriously to bore her. She made a faintly wry mouth. "Yes," she said, "it's a world all its own," and held out her lovely hands toward the warmth of the fire.

It seemed to Ermelang that she had never, in the old days, let some one to whom she was talking thus drift out of the circle of her mind. He felt that his words had had no friendly reception. He became diffident and silent. Guardedly he observed her with his inner eye, which was truly austere. He saw the change of which she had spoken, and recorded the image as she had demanded.

The oval of her face had acquired a line hardened as by the will. Nothing was left of goodness in it, little of serenity. An almost harsh determination was about her mouth. There were losses, too. Shadows lay on her temples and under her lids. Her body still betrayed her lordship over it, precisely

in its flowing ease, its expansion and repose, such as one sees in wildcats. Ermelang had heard that she toiled unceasingly, spending six to seven hours a day in practice, as in the years of her apprenticeship. The result was evident in the satiation with rhythm and grace which her limbs and joints showed and her perfect control of them.

Yet nothing gracious, nothing of freedom came from her. Ermelang thought of the rumours that accused her of an unquenchable lust after power, of dangerous political plotting, fatal conspiracies, and a definite influence upon certain secret treaties that threatened to disquiet the nations, and of not being guiltless of journalistic campaigns that in their blended brutality and subtlety menaced the peace of Europe. It had seemed as though great coal deposits in the depth of the earth were on fire; but the men above still lived and breathed without suspicion.

Those who distrusted her declared her to be a secret agent of Germany, yet she enjoyed the friendship of French and British diplomatists. Her defenders asserted that she was used without her knowledge to cover the plans and guile of the Grand Duke Cyril. Those who believed in her wholly declared that she really crossed his plans and only feigned to be his tool. The nobility disliked her; the court feared her; the common people, goaded by priests and sectaries, saw in her the embodied misfortune of their country. At a rebellion in Ivanova she had been publicly proclaimed a witch, and her name had been pronounced accursed with solemn rites. Not later than the day before, a deputation of peasants from Mohilev, whom he had met in the fish market, had told him that they had seen the Tsar at Tsarskoye Selo, and in their complaints concerning the famine in their province had, in their stubborn superstition, pointed out the wicked splendour of the foreign dancer's life. It had become proverbial among them. The Tsar, they said, had been unable to give an answer, and had gazed at the floor.

All these things were incontrovertible parts of her life and fate. He looked upon her lovely hands, rosy in the glow of the flames, and felt a dread for her.

"Is it true," he asked, with a shy smile, "that you entered the forbidden fortress thrice in succession?"

"It is true. Has it been taken amiss?"

"It has certainly aroused amazement. No stranger has ever before crossed that threshold, nor any Russian unless he entered as a prisoner. No one seems able to fathom your impulse. Many suppose that you merely wanted to see Dmitri Sheltov, who fired at the Grand Duke. Tell me your motive; I should like to have a reply to the gossips."

"They need no reply," Eva said. "I do not fear them, and need no defence. I don't know why I went. Perhaps I did want to see Sheltov. He had insulted me; he even took the trouble to publish a broadside against me. Five of his friends were sent to Siberia for that—boys of sixteen and seventeen. The mother of one of the boys wrote me a letter imploring me to save him. I tried but failed. Perhaps I really wanted to see Dmitri Sheltov. They say that he has vowed to kill Ivan Becker."

"Sheltov is one of the purest characters in the world," Ermelang said very softly. "To force a confession from him, they beat him with whips."

Eva was silent.

"With whips," Ermelang repeated. "This man! And men still dare to laugh and speak, and the sun to shine."

"Perhaps I wanted to see a man writhing under the blows of the knout," Eva said. "Perhaps it meant much to me as a stimulus. I must be nourished somehow, and the uncommon is my nourishment. A strange twitching, an original posture in crouching—such things satisfy my imagination. But as a matter of fact"—her voice grew sombre, and she stared fixedly at a spot on the wall—"I did not see him at all. But I saw others who have spent ten, twelve, fifteen years in dark

cells of stone. Once they moved about in the great world and busied their minds with noble things; now they cower in their rags, and blink at the light of a little lantern. They have forgotten how to look, to walk, to speak. An odour of decomposition was about them, and all their gestures were full of a gentle madness. But it was not for their sake either that I went. I went for the sake of the imprisoned women, who, on account of an intellectual conviction, have been torn from love and life and motherhood and devotion, and condemned to death by slow torture. Many of them had never been condemned by any tribunal. They had merely been forgotten—simply forgotten; and if their friends were to demand a trial, the same fate would threaten them. I saw one who had been brought in when she was a girl; now she was an aged woman and near her death. I saw Natalie Elkan, who was violated by a colonel of gendarmes at Kiev, and killed the monster with his own sword. I saw Sophie Fleming, who put out her own eyes with a piece of steel wire, because they had hanged her brother in her presence. Do you know what she said when I entered her cell? She lifted her blind face, and said: 'That's the way a lady smells.' Ah, that taught me something concerning women. I put my arms about her and kissed her, and whispered in her ear, asking whether I should smuggle some poison to her; but she refused."

Eva arose and walked up and down. "Yes," she said, "and still men speak and laugh, and still the sun shines. This room is filled with precious things. Lackeys stand on the stairs. Fifty feet from here is the bed of state in which I sleep. It is all mine. What I touch is mine, what I glance at is mine. They would give me the round earth itself if they had it to give and I asked it. And I would cast it like a billiard-ball into a noisome puddle, so that it might no longer defile the home of stars with its filth and its torments. I am so full of hate! I no longer know where to hide it or how to be redeemed from it! I no longer believe in any-

thing—neither in art, nor in poets, nor in myself. I only hate and destroy. I am a lost soul!"

Ermelang folded his hands. "Wonderful as you are, you should remember all you have given and to how many."

Eva stood still. "I am a lost soul. I feel it."

"Why lost? You are playing a sad game with yourself." She shook her head and whispered the verses of the *Inferno:*

> "O Simon mago, o miseri seguaci,
> Che le cose di Dio, che di bontate
> Deono essere spose, e voi rapaci
> Per oro e per argento adulterate."[1]

Thoughtfully Ermelang added:

> "Fatto v'avete Dio d'oro e d'argento;
> E che altro è da voi all'idolatre;
> Se non ch'egli uno, e voi n'orate cento?"[2]

"What is that I hear?" Eva asked, and listened. Raucous and angry voices were heard from the street, and yells and hisses. Ermelang listened too. Then he went to the window, pushed the draperies aside, and looked out.

On the snow-covered street in front of the palace fifty or sixty mujiks had assembled. One could clearly distinguish their sheepskin caps and their long coats. They stood there silently and gazed up at the windows. They had attracted a great crowd of people, men and women, and these gesticulated, full of hatred, and seemed to urge the mujiks on.

"I believe those are the Mohilev peasants," Ermelang said nervously. "I saw them march through the city yesterday."

Eva joined him for a moment at the window, and glanced

[1] "O Simon Magus, O forlorn disciples,
Ye who the things of God, which ought to be
The brides of holiness, rapaciously
For silver and for gold do prostitute."

[2] "Ye have made yourselves a god of gold and silver;
And from the idolater how differ ye,
Save that he one, and ye a hundred worship?"

out; then she returned to the middle of the room. Her smile was contemptuous. At that moment Susan Rappard came in, badly frightened. "There are people downstairs. Pierre went out to ask them what they wanted. They want to talk to you; they beg humbly to be admitted to your presence. What are we to answer such riffraff? I've telephoned police headquarters. Good heavens, what a country, what an abominable country!"

Eva lowered her eyes. "They are very poor people, Susan," she said. "Give them money. Give them all the money that is in the house."

"Nonsense!" Susan cried, horrified. "Then the next time they'll break down the door and rob us."

"Do as I tell you," Eva replied. "Go to M. Labourdemont and tell him to let you have all available cash. Then go out and take it to them. No, you had better send some one who can speak to them, and let him say that I have gone to bed and cannot receive them. And telephone the police at once and assure them that we have no need of protection. Do you understand?"

"Yes," said Susan and went out.

The crowd had increased, the noise grew, and drunken men yelled. Only the peasants remained silent. The oldest of them had come to the edge of the sidewalk. A little white lump of snow lay on his cap, and to his beard clung snow and ice. Pierre, the doorkeeper, in his livery set with silver tresses, was facing him arrogantly. The old peasant bowed low while the lackey spoke.

Eva turned to Ermelang. "Good-bye, dear friend. I am tired. Guard this hour in your memory, but forget it when you speak of me to others. The innermost things are revealed to but one. Good night."

When Ermelang reached the door of the palace, he saw a troop of mounted police appear at the other end of the street. The crowd melted away with an agility that showed long

experience. It took but a minute. Only the peasants remained. Ermelang did not know whether money had been given them as Eva had commanded. He did not care to witness the play of crude force that was sure to occur on the arrival of the armed men.

XVI

Ruth hurried home. Every Sunday afternoon her father was accustomed to spend a few hours with her. She was surprised not to find him in the flat. A letter lay on the table addressed: "To my children."

The letter read: "Dear daughter and dear son: I must leave you, and only Almighty God knows when I shall see you again. I have hesitated, and I have fought against my decision, but it is made at last. I am no longer equal to the struggle of existence under the circumstances which obtain. To get ahead in Berlin a man needs iron fists and an iron forehead. I am no longer young enough to push all obstacles brutally out of the way, so utter destitution threatens us. Instead of being your protector and provider, I am faced by the terrible possibility of becoming a burden to you, Ruth, and your exertions are even now superhuman. I have often been attracted by the thought of putting an end to my life; but my religion as well as my concern for my children's memory of me has kept me alive. I have found a friend, a fellow Jew, who has persuaded me to emigrate to America. He is advancing me the money for the voyage, and is hopeful of our success. Perhaps fate will relent to me at last. Perhaps my terrible sacrifice in leaving you two in uncertainty and want will move it to pity. I see no other way of saving myself from certain destruction. Only because I know your strength of soul, dear Ruth, only because I have the firm faith that some kind angel watches over you, do I venture upon this difficult and bitter step. I must not and dare not think. You are so young, both of you, and without pro-

tection or friends or kinsmen. Perhaps God will forgive me and protect you. I could bear no farewell but this. If I have anything good to report I shall write. Then you, too, must let me hear. I am inclosing fifty marks for your immediate needs; I cannot spare more. The rent for November is paid. Six marks and fifty pfennigs are due to the shoemaker Rösicke. With all my heart I embrace you both. Your unhappy Father."

Ruth wept.

She had been sitting still for a whole hour, when she heard a knocking at the door. She thought it was Michael. She was a little afraid of his coming, and in her need of a confidant she hoped deeply that it was Christian Wahnschaffe.

It was neither. She opened the door, and saw a ragged girl accompanied by a dog, a butcher's dog, big as a calf, with a horribly smooth, gleaming, black and white skin.

Ruth kept her hand on the door-knob while she asked the girl, who might have been anything from twelve to twenty, what she wanted. The dog had an evil glare.

The girl quietly handed her a piece of paper. It was greasy and covered with the writing of some illiterate. Ruth was frightened, and thought: "All bad news comes in writing to-day." She had not yet read the writing on the paper, but she felt that it boded some evil.

For a moment she looked out through the hall window that framed a group of black chimneys. The uncanny dog growled.

The writing on the paper was difficult to decipher. She read: "You must plese come rite away to somebody what is terrible bad of. He has took poisen it is killing him and he has got to tel you something before he dis. He is in the back room of Adeles Rest a wine room Prenzlaur Alley 112 in the yard to the left. Plese come rite away with the girl and god wil reward you. Plese for gods sake do come."

"What is the matter? What can I do?" Ruth whispered.

The girl shrugged her shoulders. As though she were dumb, she pointed to the piece of paper.

She was full of foreboding and of an inner warning, full of pain over the letter and the flight of her father, and full of horror of the butcher's dog. She was undecided, looked at the paper, and stammered: "I don't know . . . I ought to wait for Michael . . . Who is it . . . He should have given his name."

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

It seemed to Ruth that it would be wrong to disregard this cry for help. The bloodshot eyes of the dog were fixed upon her. Never had she seen an animal that seemed so naked. She put her hand over her forehead and tried to gather her troubled thoughts. She went back into the room and looked about. It seemed very lonely and bare. She slipped into her little coat and put on her hat. A faint smile gleamed for a moment on her face, as though she were glad to have come to a decision. She ran her eyes over the writing once more. "Plese for gods sake do come." One's duty seemed quite clear.

For a little she held her father's letter uncertainly in her hand. Then she folded it again, and laid it on the table beside her slightly disordered books and writing utensils. She closed the books that were open, and made a little pile of them. The dog had noiselessly followed her into the room. It followed her as she left. On the door there hung by a string a little slate and a slate pencil. Ruth wrote: "I'll be back soon. Have gone to Prenzlauer Alley. Wait for me. I must talk to you about something important." She locked the door and hid the key under the door-mat of straw.

The strange girl preserved her sleepy indifference.

On the stairs Ruth bethought herself, and knocked at Karen's door. If Christian were there, she could say a few words to him; but no one opened. She thought that Karen was asleep, and did not ring. As she descended the stairs behind the

girl and the naked dog the new responsibilities and problems of her life came into her mind. But in Ruth's young and intrepid heart, confusions grew clear and difficult things lost their terror.

In the lower hall she hesitated for a last time. She wanted to stop at Gisevius's to see if Christian were there. But two old women were reviling each other loudly and filthily in the yard, and she went on.

It was raining. It was Sunday afternoon, a time of ghastly dreariness in Stolpische Street. There was quiet under the grey November sky, save for a hum from the public houses. The pale street-lamps flickered in the twilight.

"Let us go, then," Ruth said to the girl.

The naked dog trotted between them on the wet pavement.

XVII

Crammon had written as follows to the Countess Brainitz: "Since I have pledged my word, of course I shall come. But I beg you to have the kindness to prepare Letitia in some appropriate way. As the fatal moment approaches I feel more and more uncomfortable. It is a very difficult act of expiation that you demand of me. I would rather make a pilgrimage to Mount Ararat and become a hermit there for a few years and seek for the remains of Noah's ark. I grant you that I have always enjoyed the delights that came to me without scruple; but it does not seem to me that I have deserved this. It is too much."

The countess replied that she would do her utmost to mitigate the painfulness of the meeting. She had no objection to the dear child's weeping on her bosom, before facing a father who admitted his fatherhood with so many hesitations and fears. "And so, Herr von Crammon," she wrote at the end of her letter, "we are expecting you. Letitia has returned from Paris more enchanting than ever. All the world is at her feet. I trust you will not be an exception."

"The devil take her!" Crammon growled, as he packed his bags.

When he arrived at the countess's country-house, which was called the Villa Ophelia, he was told that the ladies had gone to the theatre. He was taken to the room that had been prepared for him. He washed, dressed for dinner, strolled back to the drawing-room, stuck his hands deep into his pockets like a shivering tramp, and dropped morosely into an easy chair. He heard the rain plash, and from another room the crying of an infant. "Aha," he thought, in his vexation, "that is my grandchild, one of the twins. How do I know that some misguided creature won't put it on my knee, and ask me to admire and pet and even kiss it? Who, I say, will protect me from a bourgeois idyl of that sort? You might expect anything of a woman like the countess. These sentimental actresses who refuse to grow old are capable of anything. Is there anything more annoying in the world than a baby? It is neither a human being nor an animal; it smells of cow-udders and scented powder, and makes an insufferable and repulsive noise. It pokes its limbs into the faces of older persons; and if there are two of them, and all these horrors assail one doubly, one is apt to be quite defenceless, and may fairly inquire: 'What have you, Bernard Crammon, whose interest in the propagation of the race has always been strictly negative—what have you to do with such things?'"

Crammon ended his reflections with a smile of self-mockery. At that moment he heard cheerful voices, and Letitia and the countess entered.

He arose with exquisite chivalry. He was most friendly and most polished.

He did not conceal his astonishment over Letitia's appearance. His Austrian delight in feminine charm and his impulse to do homage to it scattered the fog of his egotistical vexation. Either, he thought, his memory was playing him

false, or else Letitia had undergone a marvellous development since the days at Wahnschaffe Castle. Crude young girls had never, to be sure, attracted him. The women whom he admired and courted had to be rich in knowledge and responsible, for that eased his own responsibility.

After the first greetings the countess spoke. "Dear people," she said, with her North German readiness to meet all occasions, "I must leave you for half an hour now. A theatre is a grimy place. I must wash my hands. Everything about it is grimy—the seats, the spectators, the actors, and the play. It always gives me a yearning for soap and water. You can use the time to chat a bit. Afterwards we'll have supper."

She rustled out, not without having cast a severe glance at Crammon.

Crammon asked thoughtfully: "I wonder why she called this building the Villa Ophelia. There are many inexplicable things in life. This is one of them."

Letitia laughed. She regarded him with a mixture of irony and shyness. But as she stood before him in her frock of soft, pale yellow silk, her neck and bosom radiating an ivory shimmer, Crammon found it difficult to sustain his self-pity. Letitia approached him, and said archly yet with feeling: "So you are my papa. Who would have thought it? It must have been quite unpleasant for you to have an old, forgotten sin suddenly transformed into a great girl."

Crammon chuckled, although a shadow still lay on his face. He took her hand into both of his and pressed it warmly. "I see that we understand each other," he said, "and that consoles me. What I feared was an outburst and tears and the emotional display that is considered fitting. It is so nice of you to be sensible. But let us sacrifice something to the ceremonial tradition of the emotions. I shall imprint a paternal kiss upon your brow."

Letitia inclined her head, and he kissed her. She said: "We

share a delightful secret now. How shall I call you in company —Uncle, or Uncle Crammon, or Uncle Bernard, or simply Bernard? "

"Simply Bernard, I'm sure," Crammon replied. "I need not remind you, of course, that you are legally the daughter of the late Herr von Febronius and of his late wife. Our situation demands of us both the most delicate tactfulness."

"Certainly," Letitia agreed, and sat down. "But just fancy the dangers that lurk in this world. Suppose I hadn't known anything and had fallen in love with you. How horrible! And I must tell you at once that I don't seem to revere you a bit. My feeling is rather sisterly, and I'm sure that I like you very, very much. Will you be satisfied with that, or is it terribly unfilial? "

"It quite suffices," said Crammon. "I can't indeed impress on you too strongly the wisdom of emotional frugality. Most people carry their feelings about the way the Ashanti women do their glass beads. They rattle them in public, and never realize what very ordinary stuff they are. But that is by the way. For our relations we must have a very special programme. This is important in order to ward off the intrusion of outsiders. I am—it goes without saying—at your service at any time and in any way. You may rely wholly upon my friendship, upon my . . . let us use the odious word—paternal friendship."

Letitia was immensely amused at his grave and anxious zeal to gain what easements the situation permitted. She was quite worthy of him in the capacity for a certain hypocrisy. Beneath her charming expression and her innocent appearance of pliability, she hid a good deal of mockery and not a little self-will. She answered: "There's no reason why we should limit each other's freedom. We shall not stand in each other's way, nor become unduly indebted to each other. Each has the right to assume the other's confidence, and thus to pre-

serve his freedom of action. I hope that that suits you."

"You are a very determined little person, and I took you to be foolishly enthusiastic and fanciful. Did the cattle drivers in the land of fire sharpen your wits? Yes, it suits me; it suits me admirably."

"There is so much ahead of me," Letitia continued, and her eyes glowed with desires and dreams, "I hardly know how I shall get through it all—people, countries, cities, works of art. I've lost so much time and I'm nearly twenty-one. Auntie wants me to stay with her, but that's impossible. I'm expected in Munich on the first of December and in Meran on the tenth. In Paris it was divine. The people were perfectly charming to me. Every one wanted me at once."

"I quite believe it, quite," said Crammon, and rubbed his chin. "But tell me, how did that adventure with the vicomte end that the countess told me about?"

"Oh, did she tell you about it?" Letitia blushed. "That wasn't very discreet." For a moment her face showed an expression of sorrow and of embarrassment. But unhappy experiences, even when they made their way into her consciousness, could not really darken it. In a moment her eyes were again full of laughter. All dark memories had fled. "Take me on a motor drive to-morrow, won't you, Bernard," she urged him, and stretched out her hands impulsively. "And you must invite the little Baron Rehmer who lives in the Grand Hotel. He's Stanislaus Rehmer, the Polish sculptor. He's going to model me and teach me Polish. He's a charming person."

Crammon interrupted her: "Explain one thing to me! Tell me what is happening in the Argentine. Hasn't that blue-skinned bandit in whom you once saw the essence of all manly virtues taken any steps against you? You don't imagine, do you, that he will simply stand by while you take French leave with his double offspring? As for me, I wouldn't have shared

the same board with him, far less the same bed. But that was not your opinion, and the law doesn't consider fluctuations of taste."

"He's brought a suit for divorce against me, and I've entered a countersuit," Letitia said. "I've seen mountains of documents. The children are mine, since he forced me to flight by his extreme cruelty. I'm not worried about it a bit."

"Does he pay you an income?"

"Not a penny so far."

"Then how do you live? You're obviously not retrenching. Where does the money come from? Who pays for all these luxuries? Or is it all a sham with a background of debts?"

Letitia shrugged her shoulders. "I hardly know," she answered, with some embarrassment. "Sometimes I have money and sometimes I haven't any. Poor auntie sold a few old Dutch pictures that she had. One can't spend one's life reckoning like a shopkeeper. Why do you talk of such horrid things?" There was such sincere pain and reproachfulness in her voice that Crammon felt like a sinner. He looked aside. Held by her charm, he lost the courage to burden her farther with coarse realities. And now, too, the countess appeared in the room. She had put on gloves of gleaming white, and her face glowed like freshly scrubbed porcelain. In her arms she carried Puck, the little Pekingese, who had grown old and slept much.

"My dears, supper is served," she cried, with the slightly stagy cheeriness of her youth.

XVIII

Karen believed that, in his own mind, Christian expected her to pay some attention to her child. She had secretly written to her mother, but no answer had come.

Christian had never mentioned the child. He did not expect to find any softening in Karen. Her behaviour gave no sign of any.

But brooding in her bed she wondered both what Christian expected of her and what had become of her child. Occasionally a glassy clinking could be heard. It came from the pearls. She would reach for them to assure herself of their presence. When she felt them, a smile of mysterious well-being appeared on her face.

For three days Christian had not been out of his clothes. He fell asleep in a corner of the sofa. Since morning a formless disquietude had possessed him.

Isolde Schirmacher, noisily bringing in Karen's soup, wakened him. He put the chairs in their places, cleared the table of his books, put the checked cover on it, and opened the window. "It's Sunday," he said.

"I don't want soup," Karen grumbled.

"And I went and made it for you extry," Isolde whined, "and a pork fricassee and all. You never want nothing."

"Eat the stuff yourself," Karen said spitefully.

Isolde carried the soup out again.

"Can't you close the window?" Karen whined. "Why do you always have to open it? A person can freeze to death."

Christian closed the window.

"I'd like to know why she carried the soup out again," Karen said after a while. "That'd suit her, to gorge herself on what's meant for me. I'm hungry."

Christian went to the kitchen and brought in the soup. He sat down beside her bed, and held the plate in both hands while she laboriously ate the soup. "It's hot," she moaned, and pressed her head against the pillows. "Open the window so's I can get a bit of air."

He opened the window. Karen looked at him with a dull wonder in her eyes. His patience was unfathomable to her. She wanted to get him to the point of scolding and showing her her place.

During the night she would make twenty demands and then reverse them with embittered impatience. His kindliness re-

mained uniform. It enraged her; she wanted to scream. She cried out to him: "What kind of a man are you, for God's sake?" She shook her fists.

Christian did not know what to answer.

At two o'clock Dr. Voltolini arrived. The clinical assistant who had examined Karen at Ruth's request had no time to make regular visits, so Ruth had suggested that Voltolini, whom she knew, be permitted to continue the treatment.

Karen refused to answer nearly all his questions. Her hatred of physicians dated from her experiences on the streets.

"I hardly know what attitude to take," Dr. Voltolini said to Christian, who accompanied him to the stairs. "There's an incomprehensible stubbornness in her. If I didn't want to accommodate you, I would have given up the case long ago." He had been deeply charmed by Christian, and often observed him tensely. Christian did not notice this.

He reproached Karen for her behaviour.

"Never mind," she said curtly. "These doctors are swindlers and thieves. They speculate on people's foolishness. I don't want him to lay his hand on me. I don't want him to listen to my heart so I can smell his bald head, or tap me all over and look like an executioner. I don't need him if I'm going to live, and less if I've got to die."

Christian did not answer.

Karen crouched in her bed. She suffered from pain to-day. A saw seemed to be drawn up and down between her ribs. She went on: "I'd like to know why you bother to study medicine. Tell me that. I've never asked you anything, but I'd like to know. What attracts you about being a saw-bones? What good will you get out of it?"

Christian was surprised at her insistent tone and at the glitter in her eyes. He tried to tell her, arguing clumsily. He talked to her as to an equal, with respect and courtesy. She did not wholly understand the sense of his words, but she thrust her head far forward, and listened breathlessly.

Christian said that it was not the study itself that had attracted him, but the constant contact with human beings into which it brought you. Then, too, there was the natural temptation to choose a study the length of which could be shortened by bits of knowledge that he already had. When he first determined to take it up, he had also thought of its practical usefulness to him. That thought he had now abandoned. He had believed that he might earn his livelihood by practising medicine; but he had been forced to the conclusion that he was morally incapable of earning money by any means. He had reached this conclusion not long since. He had gone to visit the student Jacoby and found him out. Just then a child of the landlady had fallen from a ladder and become unconscious. He had carried the child into the room, rubbed it with alcohol, listened to its heart, and stayed with it a while. When the child had quite recovered and he himself had been ready to go, the mother had pressed a two-mark piece into his hand. He had had the impulse to laugh into the woman's face. He hadn't been able to realize the cause of his shame, but the sense of it had been so strong as to make him dizzy. And that incident had taught him the impossibility of his taking money for services.

Even while he was speaking, it came to him that this was the first time he had ever talked to Karen about himself. It seemed quite easy to do so, because of the solemn attention with which she listened and which changed her whole expression. It seemed to rejuvenate him. A sense of well-being surged through him, a peculiar joy that seemed to affect his very skin. He had never known a joy like that. It was a new feeling.

And so he continued more freely—quite frankly and without reserve. Science, he told her, was rather indifferent to him in itself. He valued it as a means to an end. He didn't know whither it would lead him. The future had grown less rather than more clear to him recently. At first, as he had told her,

he thought that he might enter a profession and practise it like most young men. In that hope he had been disappointed. Nevertheless he knew that he was fundamentally on the right track. It was a time of preparation for him, and every day was enriching him. He got a great deal closer to people now, and saw them without pretence and falseness. In a hospital dormitory, in the waiting-room of a clinic, in the operating room, in the presence of hundreds of sufferers—in such scenes all hypocrisy died; there truth gripped one, and one understood what one had never understood before, and one could read the open book of life. Tubercular children, scrofulous children, large-eyed children beholding death—whoever had not seen that had not yet truly lived. And he knew whence they came and whither they went and what they said to one another, these fathers and mothers and strange crowds, and how each human creature was supremely interesting and important to itself. No horror frightened him any more, no wound, no terrible operative incision; he could see such things quite coldly now; he had even thought of volunteering for service in the lepers' colony in East Prussia. But his urge was toward deeper and ever deeper abysses of life. He was never satisfied. He wanted to steep himself in humanity. There were always new horrors behind the old, other torment beyond any he had seen; and unless he could absorb all that into himself, he had no peace. Later he hoped to find still other ways. He was only practising upon sick bodies; later he would sink himself into sick souls. But it was only when he had unveiled something secret and hidden that his heart felt free and light.

Resting her arms on the edge of the bed and bending over far, Karen watched him with avid wonder. She understood and yet did not understand. At times she caught the drift, at times the sense of the words themselves. She nodded and brooded, contorted her mouth and laughed silently and a little wildly; she held her breath, and had a dim vision of him at

last, of this noble and strange and beautiful being who had been utterly mysterious to her to this very hour. She saw him as he was, and it seemed to her as though she were in the midst of a flaming fire. It made her desperate that she had to be so silent, that she was so like stone within, that she had no words at her command, not one, that she could not even say: "Come to me, brother." For he was of flesh like her own; and that made her feel alive. She felt gratitude as she had before felt despair and weariness, disgrace and hatred. Her gratitude was like a flame cleansing her wilderness, and it was also a great urge and a woeful joy, and at last again despair. For she felt that she was dumb.

Christian left in strange haste. Karen called in Isolde Schirmacher, and told the girl she was free for the evening. She got up and dressed slowly and painfully. She could hardly stand, and the room whirled around with her. The table seemed to cling to the ceiling and the oven to be upside down. But at each step she trod more firmly. She hid the pearls in her bosom. She faltered down the stairs, and strange colours flickered before her eyes. But she wanted to do something for him. That thought drove her onward. She wanted to drag herself to a cab and drive to her mother and ask: "Where is the child? Where did you take it?" And if the old woman was impudent, she meant to clutch her and strangle her till she told the truth.

To do something for him! To prove to him that there was a Karen whom he did not know.

She crept along the walls of the houses.

Christian was just coming back when a policeman and a working man, followed by an idle crowd, half led, half carried her home. He was confounded. She was white as chalk. They laid her on the bed. Since Isolde was not there, Christian knocked at the door of the Hofmann flat to ask Ruth to help him with Karen. But he caught sight of the little slate, and read the message that Ruth had left for her brother.

The chaotic unrest that he had felt all day rose more powerfully within his soul.

XIX

And now things had gone so far with Johanna that she had given herself to him whom she despised. At last she had the valid proof of her own feebleness of soul. She needed no longer to fear an inner voice that would defend her, nor any hope that might counsel her to guard herself. It was superfluous now to spare her body, and no longer necessary to keep up the little self-deceptions that bolstered up her brittle pride. She was unmasked in her own eyes, and, in a sense so different from the ordinary moral one, dishonoured . . . dishonoured for all time and all eternity . . . branded. . . . She had become what she had always suspected herself capable of becoming. Things were settled.

From the moment that he had waited for her in the street that day, Amadeus Voss had not left her side. From time to time he had repeated with mad monotony: "I love you, Johanna." She had made no reply. With compressed lips and lowered eyes she had walked on and on, for more than an hour. The fear of human glances and human presences had kept her from fleeing by tram. Furthermore it was he who chose their path by a silent command. At last he had stopped in front of a little coffee-house. He neither asked her nor invited her in. He took it for granted that she would follow, and she did.

In a dim corner they sat facing each other. He took out a pencil and drew mystic symbols on the marble top of the table. This oppressive state of silence had lasted nearly half an hour. At last he had spoken: "To utter the word 'love' is to become guilty of an enormous triviality. It has been flattened out and savours of cheap fiction. Speak it and you become secondhand. The feeling is unique, incomparable, strange, and wondrous—an unheard-of adventure, a dream of

dreams. The word is a base sound taken from a tattered reader. But how shall one communicate with another when the feeling strangles and shakes you, and your days are the days of a madman? I came to the age of twenty-six without knowing this magic and this wonder. No hand was stretched out toward me, no eye sought me out, and so I looked with hatred upon all who were in the grip of what seemed to be a blasphemous passion. Among the playmates of my childhood little erotic friendships were common. Every boy had his little sweetheart with whom he flirted instinctively and yet innocently. I excluded myself from all that and hated. On Sunday afternoon they would stroll out beyond the village. I would follow some couple, and if the boy and girl sat down somewhere to chat, I would observe them from some ambush with rage and bitterness. You have a keen enough insight to realize how I felt then and later and until this very day. Longing—yes, well, that's another of those pale, drained concepts. Occasionally I stretched out my hand in my confusion and my cowardly desire, and trembled when a woman's sleeve brushed mine. I became the fool of one who sought to trap me, and I let the accursed dancer poison my blood. Sometimes I flung myself into the gutter, and became defiled merely to silence the pitiless voice of nature, which is a heritage of the Evil One and the work of Satan."

She had not raised her eyes from the table, and the hieroglyphs covered half of its top. "I won't make any promises in the name of my so-called love," he continued, and his bowed face became a mask of pain. "I don't know whither it will lead either me or her who elects to be mine. To be mine—that has a sound of horror, hasn't it? All I can say is that that woman will contribute to my salvation and redeem me from torment. You may reply: 'What have I to do with your salvation or with the torments of a lost soul?' Very well. Let us not bring that in. But consider whether in all the world there is another man whom you can

win wholly, utterly, body and soul? Every step and every breath of yours is infinitely precious to me; there is an equal life and loveliness to me in the lashes of your eyes and the hem of your garment. I am within your very body, and throb in the pulsing of your heart. There is a fear that one feels of one's own heart-beats; and there is one that is felt of another's. Shall I use more words? These are enough. All words are unholy, and creep on the fringe of experience."

The woman in Johanna had succumbed. A terrible curiosity had enslaved her. Because all that she was and did seemed unnatural and distorted to her, and because she was weary and sore, she let herself glide into those desperately outstretched arms.

She seemed to fall into a depth where heat and glow corroded what they touched. Shattering ecstasy and crushing weariness alternated. Scenes pallid and terrible flitted by as on the screen of a cinematograph, and the hours raced to their hideous death.

She wrote to her sister in Bucharest: "You're so very near the Orient, and I've always been told that it is full of mighty wizards. Couldn't you, please, use your well-tried charms to get the better of one of them, and steal from him some magic formula by virtue of which one can lose the consciousness of one's self? Mine, you see, is quite ragged and tattered. And if I could exchange it for a nice, new, fashionable one, I'd be helped so much! I could marry a nice Jewish manufacturer and have babies and eat chocolates and flirt with the *jeunesse dorée* and realize similar ideals. I beseech you, Clarisse, find me a wizard—young or old, it doesn't matter. But I must have a wizard to be saved."

XX

At eight o'clock in the evening Christian knocked at Ruth's door again. No one answered. He was surprised.

He knew that the key was put under the door-mat when no one was at home. He raised the mat and saw the key. Then he went back to Karen's rooms.

She seemed to be sleeping. Her face was like a piece of chalk. Her strawy hair, like a flaming helmet, contrasted in ghastly fashion with that pallor. After she had lain rigid for a while, she had undressed herself and crept back into bed.

Christian listened at the wall again and again, trying to catch some voice, some sign of life from the Hofmann flat. Silence. When two hours had passed, he took a lighted candle and stepped out into the hall. The key was still under the mat.

He thought he heard a sound of lamentation in the air. He did not think he had the right to unlock the door and enter the flat. And yet, after he had stood there for some time in indecision, he slipped the key into the keyhole and opened the door.

A breath of melancholy came from the empty room. He put the candle on the table and caught sight of Hofmann's letter of farewell. He hesitated to read it. He thought he heard steps and stopped to listen. The feeling that the letter would explain Ruth's absence finally decided him to read it.

The letter seemed to him to remove all doubt. She had probably thought her father still in the city, and set out to find him and dissuade him from his plan. The acquaintance with whom she had hoped to find him probably lived in Prenzlauer Alley, and Michael, when he had read her message, had probably hurried on to the same place.

Although this reasoning seemed plausible enough, his imagination was unsatisfied. He looked questioningly at the furniture and the walls, and touched with tenderness the books on the table that Ruth had so recently had in her hands. He left the room, locked the door, hid the key under the mat, and returned to Karen's rooms.

He blew out the light and lay down on the sofa. These

nights of brief and light slumber were exhausting him. His cheeks were thin, his profile peaked, his lids inflamed, and his brain morbidly tense.

The house, sunk into the treacherous immobility of its nights, appeared to him in the guise of a monstrous skeleton, consisting of countless walls and beds and doors steeped in malodorous darkness. Yet he loved it—loved the shabby stairs, the weather-beaten walls and posts, the fires in its many hearths that he had seen in passing, the emaciated woman who, in some room, scolded her wailing babe to sleep. He loved the manifold disconsolateness of these tangled lives; he loved the withered, sooty little flowerpots by the court windows, the yellow apples on the shelves, the scraps of paper in the halls, the very refuse that dishevelled women carried in troughs into the street.

But still his inner vision clung to the door-mat of straw and to the key under it, to Hofmann's letter, the books and papers on the table, the little cotton frock on a nail, the loaf of bread on the side table. And from all these things there emerged in his consciousness the figure of Ruth, as though it were rising from the elements of which it was made.

He remembered accompanying her to one of the great shops, where she bought a pair of cheap gloves. With the crowd they had drifted through the show-rooms and he recalled the very still delight upon her face with which she had regarded the mountains of snowy lingerie and of brilliantly hued silks—the laces and hats and girdles and costumes and all things that enchant and lure a young girl. But she had been content with that strange, still delight that seemed to say: how well it is that such things are! She had had no desire, no reaching out of her own, only a pleasure in the lovely qualities of things that were.

And thus too, without desire and without reaching out, she passed among men, and perceived the festive glitter of the great shops, the radiant wealth of palaces, and the fever of

pleasure-seeking that throbbed in the streets when the great city strove to forget its toil. With that same gesture and that still content, she withdrew herself from sharp allurements and the anodynes of a thousand temptations, from all that transcended true measure and her own power; she threw the mantle of her youth over the world and stood in its midst, deeply moved, and yet aloof.

He had been present one day when she was arguing with the student Lamprecht, whose ideas were those of a demagogue. She had a charming lightness of speech, although her opinions were decided enough. Action and sacrifice had been mentioned, and Ruth said that she could not see the difference, that often they were closely akin or even identical. And finally she said: "It is the mind alone that conquers obstacles, and in it action and sacrifice are one." When her opponent replied that the mind must somehow communicate itself to the world and that this was, in itself, action, she had replied with burning cheeks: "Must one really proclaim and communicate the mind to the world? Then it ceases to be itself. The service of the heart is better than the service of lips or hands."

Although Christian had listened with the superior smile of one who never engages in argument, he had seen then that this voice had become necessary to his very life, and also this radiant eye and this glowing heart, and this vibrant soul that was so profoundly experienced and yet so incomparably young. She gave him to himself. She was his sister and his friend. He was revealed to himself through her pure humanity. And he could find no sleep, for her shadow appeared to him constantly and yet did not find the courage to address him. Now and then he started suddenly and his heart beat quickly. Once he beheld her in bodily form, and seemed to hear an imploring whisper; and a cold shudder ran over him. He arose and lit the candle again. Karen moaned.

He stepped up to her bed. "Water," she murmured.

He brought her water, and while she drank he bent affectionately over her. Her eyes were large and looked at him with a great sadness. There were tears in them.

XXI

Amadeus Voss lived in Zehlendorf, near the race track, in the gabled attic of a new house. He had a view of meadows stretching toward a rim of pine-woods. On the green plain projected a huge advertising sign with gigantic letters: Zehlendorf-Grunewald Development Company, Ltd.

"They put that up within the last week so as to keep my soul within proper bounds," Voss said. "It's a clever memento, isn't it? I'm told the company plans to build a church here. Magnificent! In the neighbourhood there is also a bell-foundry."

Johanna sat at the opposite window, through which the sunlight that she sought shone in. Her little face had grown thin. Her beautifully curved mouth with its sweet sadness lost its charm on account of her homely nose. "You might get employment as a lay reader," she said impudently, and dangled her legs like a schoolgirl. "Or do you think it's a Protestant business? Of course, every one is Protestant here. Why don't you convert the unbelievers? You let your most solid talents go to waste."

Voss made a grimace. With dragging steps he went through the large studio-like room. "To your kind of free thought all faith is an object of barter," he said bitterly. "Why do you mock even at yourself? See to it lest the light that is in you be not darkness! That is the monition of the Gospel. But what does that word 'Gospel' mean to you? A cultured phrase, or something to buy and sell."

Johanna, supporting her head on her hand, whispered inaudibly, "No one knows how it came that Rumpelstilzkin is my name." Aloud she said: "I'm getting a bad report, I see.

I'm resuming my seat, teacher. I know that my laziness is obvious even from your exalted seat."

Amadeus stopped in front of her. "Have you never believed? Has the inscrutable never touched your heart? Have you never trembled before Him? Have you no reverence? What kind of a world do you come from?"

She answered with biting sarcasm. "We spent our days dancing around the golden calf—all of us, great-grandmother, grandmother, mother and child. Fancy that! It's dizzying."

Impervious to the mockery through which she expressed the fragile charm of her clever mind, Voss fixed on her a look of sombre passion. "Do you at least believe in me?" he asked, and grasped her shoulders.

She resisted and withdrew herself. She thrust her hands against his chest and bent back her head. "I believe in nothing, nothing." Her whole body throbbed and shook. "Not in myself nor you nor God nor anything. You are quite right. I don't." Her brows contracted with pain. Yet she melted, as always, before his glow. It was her ultimate of earth and life, her last anodyne, her weakness yearning for destruction. Her lips grew soft and her lids closed.

With savage strength Amadeus lifted her in his arms. "Neither in yourself nor God nor me," he murmured. "But in him! Or perhaps you do not believe in him either? Tell me!"

She opened her eyes again. "In whom?" she asked astonished.

"In him!" His utterance was tormented. She understood him, and with an infinitely sinuous movement glided from his arms.

"What do you want of me?" she asked, and rearranged her abundant brown hair with nervous gestures.

"I want to know," he answered, "to know at last. I cannot bear this any longer. What happened between you two? How do you explain the intimate tone of your letter to him, and

your questions whether he had already forgotten you, whether you dared even ask? No doubt you played the well-known game—the dangerous, lecherous game of moths in the lamplight. I am not so stupid as not to have guessed that. But how far did you venture toward the lamp—as far as the chimney or as far as the flame? And when he left you, what demands had you the right to make? What was he to you? What is he?"

It was the first time that Voss had spoken out. The question had been strangling him. He had set little traps for Johanna and searched her expression, resented her evasions and yet respected her delicacy. And all that had heightened his impatience and suspicion. The fingers of one hand clenched under his chin, he stood there lean and rocking strangely to and fro.

Johanna said nothing. A smile, half mocking, half of suffering, hovered about her lips. She wished that she were far away.

Voss gritted his teeth and went on: "Don't think it's jealousy. And if it is—perhaps there is no other word—yet I do not mean what you were taught to think it in the poisoned gardens in which you grew up. Why have you not been frank with me? Am I not worthy of so much? Did you not feel my dumb beseeching? I need not tell you what is at stake. If you did not suspect it, you would not fear to speak. From my childhood on I have lived in outer servitude and inner obedience. I have been taught the lofty and sacred ideal of chastity of our faith. Only despair over the unreachable farness of that ideal plunged me into the sinks of the earth's iniquity. And so I place on innocence and spotless purity quite another value than the sleek little gentlemen, the trained animals, of your world. I who stand before you am sin and the sense of sin, with all its misery and uncleanness; and you can save me by a word. I have confessed to you all the cries of my own breast. Have I not said enough? Yet even what

I have said seems shameless beside the vanity of your reserve. Can I do nothing but sting your senses, you heathen girl, and never reach your vitals or your soul? Confess, or I will tear the truth from you with red-hot pincers. Shall I have waited and renounced, to be fed on the leavings of another's satiety? Did you live with him? Speak! Did he cheat me of your purity—he who has cheated me of everything? Speak! "

Johanna, aflame with indignation, took her hat and coat and left him. He did not move. Scarcely had she closed the door behind her, scarcely did he hear the sound of her retreating steps, when he raced after her. With equal speed he returned for his hat. When she was leaving the house he was beside her. " Hear me," he stammered. " Don't judge me harshly." She quickened her pace to escape him. He would not fall behind. " My words were rough, Johanna, even brutal. But they were inspired by the very humbleness of love." She turned into the street to the railway station. He blocked her path; he threatened to use force if she persisted. Passers-by turned and looked at them. To avoid a public scandal she had to go back with him. " At least," she pleaded, " let us not return to the house. I can't stay in the room. We can talk while we are out. But don't come so near. People are laughing at us."

" People, people! The world is full of people. They know nothing of us nor we of them. Say that you forgive me, and I'll be as calm as though I had come from a card party." He was pale to his forehead.

They walked in the wet, snowy air and over the soaking earth. The street ran into a field-path. Above the setting sun the sky was full of shredded clouds—red, yellow, green, blue. An express train thundered past them. Electric signals trilled. It was tiring to walk over the slippery leaves, but the damp wind cooled their faces.

Amadeus wore himself out in explanations. In the defence of himself, the rejected and humiliated one, the tormented

member of a caste and race of the rejected and humiliated, he found expressions of such power that they oppressed Johanna and bent her will. He spoke of his love for her, of this terrible storm in his blood, from which he had hoped purification and strength and liberation, but which was wasting and crushing him instead. And so his doubt of her was like a doubt of God. If a youth doubts God the world breaks down and sinks into pure agony. And such was his case in the nights in which he panted for alleviation, and the darkness became an abyss filled with a thousand purple tongues of flame.

And like a blinded man turning in a circle, he began again to ask his question, first carefully and slyly, then impetuously and with passion. He pointed out incriminating details and circumstances that poisoned his imagination. He appealed to her pity, her sense of honesty, to some not wholly buried spark of piety within her. And again he painted the state of his soul, besought her with uplifted hands, then became silent, and with his sombre eyes looked helplessly about.

Johanna had been astonished from the beginning that the nature of her brief contact with Christian, which shone to her from the past like a bit of dawn, had not been obvious to him. If he had understood and taken what had happened as a matter of course, she would probably have admitted it quite naïvely. But his savagery and his avidity aroused her defiance and her fear more and more. Every new attack of his made her feel more unapproachable, and she suddenly felt that she had a secret to guard from him, a deep and proud secret, which no assurances and no persecutions would make her yield up. It was a possession that all good spirits bade her keep, that she should never give up to him who would regard it as a shameful thing and into whose unblessed power she had fallen. So she built defences, and was ready to fight and to lie, to endure all that was ugly and repulsive, reproof and degradation.

And these, indeed, she came to endure. All his obsessions

concentrated themselves on this one point. His glances searched and his words probed her; behind every tenderness and every touch there lurked a question. If she evaded him, he became enraged. If she soothed him, he cast himself down and kissed her feet. She took pity on him, and for the space of a few ecstatic hours deceived him with the liberally invented details of a platonic relationship. He seemed to believe her and begged her forgiveness, promising more gentleness and silence and consideration. But hardly had a day passed before the old mischief sprang up anew. His eye was sharpened as by acid. Christian Wahnschaffe was the enemy, the thief, the adversary. What happened at such and such a time? What did she say to him on such an occasion? What had he answered? Whence had he come? Whither was he going? Did he ask her to yield herself? Did she kiss him? Once? Many times? Had she desired his kisses? When was she ever alone with him? How did the room look? What sort of a dress had she worn? It was hopeless. It was like a drill that turns and eats into wood. Johanna repulsed him violently; she jeered and sighed and hid her face. She wept and she laughed, but she did not yield by the breadth of a hair.

Next came utter exhaustion. She was often so worn out that she lay on a sofa all day, pale and still. She let her relatives take her to theatres, concerts, picture galleries. With dull eyes and freezing indifference she endured these demands. The sympathy of people was a burden to her. What could they do to soften her cruel self-contempt? This killing contempt she transformed into a weapon, the two-edged sword of her wit, and this she turned against her own breast. Her sayings became famous in large circles of society. She described how she had once been bathing by a lake and how a sudden gust of wind had blown away her bath-chair. "And there," she closed, "I stood as naked as God had created me in His wrath."

Her aversion from him who was her lover rose to such a

point that a cold fever shook her if she thought of him, that she secretly mocked his gestures, his tones, his clerical speech, his voracious glance. She made appointments with him which she did not keep. He sent telegrams and special delivery letters and messengers. He lay in wait at her door and questioned the servants until, beside herself, she went to him, and in her indignation said icy and unspeakably cruel things. Then he would become humble and rueful, and sincerely so. And the terror of losing her would wring words from him that were mad and diabolical.

She wasted away. She scarcely ate and slept. Again and again she determined to make an end of everything and leave the city. But there was the element of perverse desire. Her over-refined body, her over-subtle soul, her morbidly sensitive organism melted into a yearning for the cruel, for mysterious voluptuousness, for slavery and degradation, for every extremity of suffering and delight.

One evening she was crouching, half dressed, in a chair. Her long hair flowed beautifully over her slender shoulders. She held her head between her hands and looked like a disconsolate little harlequin, very pale and still. Amadeus Voss sat at the table with folded arms, and stared into the lamp. This isolation of two beings, without friends or dignity or happiness, seemed to Johanna like the inexorable fate of galley-slaves tied to the same oar. Suddenly she arose and gathered up her hair with a graceful gesture, and said with a scurrilous dryness: "Come in, ladies and gentlemen. This is the great modern show. The latest. Up to the minute. Sensation guaranteed. Magnificent suspense interest. Revelation of all the secrets of modern woman and modern man. Gorgeous finale. Don't miss it!"

She went up to the mirror, gazed at her image as though she did not know it, and made a comical bow.

Amadeus lowered his head in silence.

XXII

The poor imbecile Heinzen said he heard a whispering always in his ears. He shook like a leaf and his face was green.

Niels Heinrich kicked him under the table.

Whenever the door was opened the laughter and the screeching of women leapt out into the fog. Also one could see the building lots at the edge of which this drinking shanty had been erected. A new quarter was springing up here. Beams and scaffoldings and cranes presented a confusion like a forest struck by a tornado. Walled foundations, pits, construction huts, trenches, bridges, hills of bricks and sand, carts—everything was dimly lit by the arc-lamps, which seemed to be hidden in grey wadding.

When the door was closed one was in a cave.

There was a whispering in his ears, Joachim Heinzen insisted. Without understanding he listened to the filthy witticisms with which an old stone-mason regaled the company. Niels Heinrich threw a dark glance at Joachim and forbade the publican to fill his glass. The fellow, he said, was crazy enough now.

Gradually the room grew empty. One o'clock was approaching. Three steady topers still stood by the bar. The nightwatchman had just looked in on his rounds and drunk a nip of kümmel. The innkeeper regarded his late guests morosely, sat down, and nodded.

Niels Heinrich said to the simpleton that he would give him five talers to clear out. "If you don't fade away you'll catch hell, my boy," he said. His reddish beard rose and fell. About his neck he had wound a yellow shawl so many times that his head seemed to be resting on a cushion. His sallow, freckled face seemed a mere mass of bone.

Joachim's limbs trembled. Ontside the women of the streets were passing by, and their laughter sounded like the clatter of

crockery. "Five talers," said the imbecile and grinned. "That's all right." But he was still trembling. He had trembled just so the whole day, and the day before, and the day before that. "I'd like to buy a black-haired wench," he murmured.

"For money you can see the very devil dance," Niels Heinrich replied.

Now even those at the bar got ready to leave. "Closing time, gentlemen," the innkeeper called out. He repeated his warning three times. A clock rattled.

"I'll get what I want," said the simpleton. "I want one like a merry-go-round. Merry. Around and around."

"All right, boy! Go ahead! But don't you let no balloon run you down," Niels Heinrich jeered, and stared at his own fingers as though they had spoken to him. "Go ahead!"

"And I want one like a parrot," said the simpleton, "all dressed up and fine." And in a broken voice he sang a stave of a vulgar song.

Niels Heinrich's silence was grim.

"And I want one that's like what a lady is, elegant and handsome," Joachim continued, and emptied the lees in his glass. "That's what! Give me the five talers. Give 'em to me." But suddenly he shuddered, his eyes seemed to protrude from their hollows, and he uttered a sound that had a strange and horrible kinship with a whine.

Niels Heinrich arose, and jerked his companion upward by the collar. He threw the money to pay his reckoning on the table, and pulled the simpleton out into the street. He grasped his arm, and drew the reeling, horribly whimpering creature along with him. He did not speak. He had pulled his blue cap over his eyes. His face was full of brooding thoughts. He paid no attention to snow or mud.

The fog swallowed up the two figures.

XXIII

David Hofmann had written a last message of farewell to his children from Bremerhaven. The postman had stuck the card halfway under the door, and Christian read it.

So Ruth could not be with her father. Here was a certainty that terrified him. Where was she then? And where was Michael?

He informed the house agent of the disappearance of the two, and the police were notified.

Christian knew the names of some of the families where she had given lessons. He visited these people, but no one could give him a hint. He went to the institutions that she had attended and to friends with whom she had associated. Everywhere there was the same surprise and helplessness. He was sent on wild errands and to other people. Some one would think he or she had last seen Ruth at such a place. The track was always lost. He would follow chance traces from morning until night, but they always faded from sight. In his anxiety and his anxious inquiries he finally found himself going in a futile circle.

He had entrusted Isolde Schirmacher and the widow Spindler with the care of Karen.

At the end of the fifth day he came home wearily. Botho Thüngen and the student Lamprecht had helped him in his search. It had all been in vain. If a faint hope arose, it was extinguished the next moment.

And where was Michael?

Christian climbed the stairs. The gas jet in the hall hissed. Near the balustrade cowered the white kitten and mewed. Christian bent over and gathered it up in his hands. It began to purr with infinite content, and snuggled against his coat. He stroked the silken fur, and a sense of the animal's well-being passed into his nerves.

By agreement with the agent he had taken the key of the

Hofmann flat into his keeping. He was to deliver it up next morning to a police detective who would come to investigate.

He unlocked the door and entered the dark room. The air was stuffy. Every breath of Ruth's presence had faded. Ruth, little Ruth! As his emotion gathered in him, the darkness ceased to be unnatural and disturbing.

He sat down beside the table. The dim light that came in from the hall fell on the books and papers of his little friend. He got up and closed the door. Only now was he able to summon up the image of Ruth as vividly as he had been able to do during the first night after her disappearance. Not only did she emerge from the darkness as she had done then; she even spoke to him.

She fixed on him her exquisitely laughing eyes, and in a tone whose seriousness belied that expression utterly, she said: "No, never, nevermore."

What did the words mean? What was their significance?

The fog gathered more thickly against the window panes. The kitten snuggled deeper into his arms. Its white fur shimmered indistinctly in the darkness. This breathing, living creature, warm and affectionate, prevented him from yielding to a grief that threatened to drag him into unknown depths.

Suddenly he had a vision. A landscape appeared before him. There was a path bordered by tall poplars in autumnal foliage, a path of mud, of black morass. On either side of it the heath stretched to infinity. There were the black, triangular silhouettes of a few huts, with windows red from the hearth-fires within. Here and there were puddles of dirty, yellow water, which reflected the grey sky and in which tree-trunks rotted. Over the whole scene was a whitish twilight, and in the distance emerged the rude form of a shepherd; and in that distance was a mass of egg-shaped bodies, half of wool, half of slime, that jostled one another. It was the herd of sheep. With gloom and difficulty they crept along the muddy path to a farmstead—a few mossy roofs of straw and turf amid

the poplars. There was the dark sheepfold. Its open door showed a cavernous blackness; but through chinks in the back wall of the sheepfold flickered faint glints of the twilight. The caravan of wool and slime disappeared in the cavern. The shepherd and a woman with a lantern closed the door.

How was it that the invisible-visible presence of Ruth evoked this landscape in his soul? He had never, so far as he knew, seen such a landscape. How did it happen that this landscape exhaled something calming and shattering at once, yearning and fear—that it had power over him as scarcely any human fate or form or face? And how did it come to pass that Ruth's "no, never, nevermore," seemed the mysterious meaning of this landscape, the symbol of this vision?

Ruth, little Ruth!

Grief and sadness entered into Christian's very marrow.

XXIV

Crammon had determined to stay only one week at the Villa Ophelia. In the first place he did not like to prolong the family idyl beyond decent and appropriate limits. In the second place his programme, which he was not in the habit of changing except for catastrophes, demanded his departure for England. But the one week merged into a second, and the second into a third. At the end of the third week he was still unable to come to a decision.

He was rancorous against his surroundings and against himself, and as whimsical as a woman. He blamed himself, accused himself of senile indecision, and was full of bitter dissatisfaction with the slovenliness of the countess's establishment. The cuisine was, in his view, too greasy, and threatened to upset his sensitive digestion; the servants were not properly respectful, because their wages were too often in arrears. The constant stream of guests was generally lacking in nothing so much as in distinction. There were second-rate musicians

and poets and painters, and women of the same calibre. Futhermore there were aristocrats of doubtful reputation. In brief, a gathering of parasites, the thriftless, the unprofitable.

Among them Crammon had the appearance of a relic of an exalted and hieratic age.

One day the two nephews of the countess, Ottomar and Reinhold Stojenthin, appeared. They had succeeded in getting leave of absence for two months. Leave of absence from what? Crammon inquired with raised brows. They wanted to accompany Letitia to Munich. "They are splendid chaps, Herr von Crammon," said the countess. "Do take them under your protection." Crammon was vexed. "I've always lived in perfect dread of some one's discovering my hidden talent for the rôle of a governess. The achievement was reserved for you, countess."

His relations to Puck, the Pekingese, were strained. The little animal enraged him inexplicably. Whenever he saw it his eyes grew round and his face scarlet with anger. Perhaps it was the dog's deep tawny coat; perhaps it was its sleepiness; perhaps he suspected it of maliciously feigning a delicate state of health so that it could sprawl on silken couches and have tidbits stuck into its mouth. The anxious care that Letitia gave the creature annoyed him. Once the little dog had gotten up from the carpet and, wheezing asthmatically, had slipped out through the door. "Where is Puck?" Letitia asked after a while from the depth of her armchair. Puck wasn't to be seen. "Do whistle to him, Bernard," she begged in her flute-like voice. "You can do that yourself," said Crammon quite rudely. Letitia, calmly pathetic, dreamily preoccupied, said: "Please do it for me. I can't whistle when I'm excited."

So Crammon whistled to the hateful beast.

Still, a decision had to be arrived at. "Are you going to Munich with me?" the siren Letitia cooed, and laughed at

his anger. To her aunt she said: "He's still raging, but he'll go with us in the end."

Crammon nursed an ethical intention. He would influence Letitia to her own advantage. He could open her eyes to the dangerous downward slope of the path which she pursued with such unfortunate cheerfulness. She could be helped and supported and given a timely warning. Her extravagance could be checked, and her complete lack of judgment could be corrected. She was utterly inexperienced and thoughtless. She believed every liar, and gave her confidence to every chatterer. She was enthusiastic over any charlatan, held all flattery to be sincere, and provided every fool who paid court to her with a halo of wisdom and of pain. She needed to be brought to reason.

Crammon was quite right. Yet a mere smile of Letitia would silence him. She blunted the point of the most pertinent maxims and of the soundest moralizing by holding her head a little on one side, looking at him soulfully and saying in a sweetly and archly penitential tone: "You see, dear Bernard, I'm made this way. What's the use of trying to be different? Would you want me to be different? If I were, I'd only have other faults. Do let me be as I am." And she would slip one hand through his arm, and with the other tickle his almost double chin. And he would hold still and sigh.

The following persons started on the journey to Munich: Letitia, her personal maid, the nurse Eleutheria, the twins, the countess, Fräulein Stöhr, Ottomar and Reinhold, Crammon, the Pole Stanislaus Rehmer. Also the following animals: Puck, the Pekingese, a bullfinch in one cage and a tame squirrel in another. The luggage consisted of fourteen large trunks, sixteen hand-bags, seven hat-boxes, one perambulator, three luncheon baskets, and innumerable smaller packages wrapped in paper, leather, or sack-cloth, not to mention coats, umbrellas, sticks, and flowers. In the train the countess wrung

her hands, Puck barked and whined pathetically, Letitia made a long list of things that had been forgotten at the last moment, the maid quarreled with the conductor, the twins screamed, Eleutheria offended the other passengers by baring her voluminous breasts, Fräulein Stöhr had her devout and patient heavenward glance, Ottomar and Reinhold debated some literary matter, the Pole spent his time gazing at Letitia, Crammon sat in sombre mood with legs crossed and twiddled his thumbs.

With the exception of the Stojenthin brothers, who went to a more modest hostelry, the whole company took rooms in the Hotel Continental. The bill which was presented to the countess at the end of each day was rarely for less than three hundred marks. "Stöhr," she said, "we must find new sources of help. The child suspects nothing, of course. It would break her heart if she had an inkling of my pecuniary anxieties." Fräulein Stöhr, without abandoning her air of virtue, succeeded in implying her doubt of that.

A lawyer of the highest reputation was entrusted with the suit against the Gunderams. The representative of the defendants had been instructed to refuse all demands. There were endless conferences, during which the countess flamed with noble indignation, while Letitia exhibited an elegiac amazement, as though these things did not concern her and had faded from her memory. Her statements as to what she had said and done, concerning agreements and events, were never twice the same. When these contradictions were brought to her attention, she answered, ashamed and dreamy and angry at once: "You're frightfully pedantic. How am I to remember it all? I suppose things were as you've said they were in your documents. What are the documents for?"

The old litigation concerning the forest of Heiligenkreuz was also to be accelerated. The countess's hopes in this matter were justified in no respect. Nevertheless she felt that she was a wealthy landowner, and sought capitalists to finance her on the security of this dusty and hopeless claim.

She failed, yet her faith was unshaken. She even prevailed upon herself to enter places that she considered unhygienic, and chaffer with persons who were not immaculate. "Don't worry, my angel," she said to Letitia. "Everything will turn out well. By Easter we shall be rolling in money."

Letitia did not, indeed, worry. She enjoyed herself and was radiant. Every day was so full of delight and pleasure that it seemed rank ingratitude to think of the morrow except under the same aspect. Life clung to her as pliantly and adorningly as a charming frock. Since her inner life was unshadowed and all men smiled upon her, she believed the world at large to be in a lasting condition of content. Rumours of pain and misfortune, she thought, must somewhere have their ground in reality. But by the time that a knowledge of them reached her, they were transformed into the likeness of beauty and legend.

She read the books of poets, listened to music, danced at balls, chatted and walked, and everything was to her a mirror of her loveliness and a free, playful activity. She was quite free, for she never felt the impulse toward restraint. She had time for every one, for the moment was her master. And so she was most disarmingly unpunctual, and so innocent in her faithlessness that those whom she betrayed always ended by consoling her. Her affairs were quickly going from bad to worse. She knew nothing of it. She created an unparalleled confusion among men, but she was quite unconscious of it. Whoever spoke to her of love received love. She was sorry for them. Why not share one's overflowing wealth? Six or eight passionate wooers could always simultaneously boast of weighty evidences of her favour. If any one reproached her, she was astonished and not seldom on the verge of tears, like some one whose pure intentions had been incomprehensibly misunderstood.

One of the twins fell ill, and a physician was summoned. He delayed coming, and she sent for another. Next morning

she had forgotten both, and sent for a third, simply because his name in the telephone directory had pleased her. The consequence was confusion. It happened too that she would fall in love with one of the physicians for a few hours. Then the confusion was heightened.

She accepted three separate invitations for Christmas week, and promised to go at the same time to Meran, Salzburg, and Baireuth. When the time came she had forgotten all three, and went nowhere.

Her maid was discovered to be a thief. A dozen girls presented themselves for the vacant position. She took a liking to the last, and forgot that she had already taken a liking to the first and had hired her.

She was invited to luncheon and appeared at tea. A sum had been scraped up to pay pressing bills. She loaned it to Rehmer, who was poor as a church mouse and needed new clothes. The confusion grew and grew.

But it did not touch her. Her mood was exalted and festive, her gait a little careless, her head charmingly bent a little to one side. Her soft, deer-like eyes were full of expectation and delight and just a shade of cunning.

Crammon could not possibly approve this state of affairs. It was a topsyturvy world, in which all rules were trodden under foot. A very dainty, very pretty foot, no doubt, but the result was enough to frighten any one. He growled his complaints like Burbero in Goldoni's play. He said things would come to a bad end. He had never known such slovenliness in all things not to come to a bad end. His horror was that of a bourgeois who sees his pet virtues outraged. Fascinated and frightened by the spectacle of Letitia's gambols on the edge of an abyss, he denied his own past, forgot his follies, his adventures, his freebooting days, his greed and varied lusts, and the remnants of them that accompanied him even now. He forgot all that. He complained.

One evening he was dining alone with the countess. Letitia

had gone to a concert. The countess had something on her heart, and his suspicions were vigilant. Her ways were mild and she served him the best of everything. She spoke of the change of domicile that had been planned, and said that she and Letitia had not yet been able to agree whether it were better to spend the coming months in Wiesbaden or Berlin. She asked Crammon's advice. He begged her to permit him not to interfere in the controversy. He had other plans of his own, and no desire to witness a noisy débâcle.

At that the countess began to lament her pecuniary embarrassment and complain of the impatience of her creditors. For the dear child's sake she had determined to ask him for a considerable loan. She would give him any security he desired, provided her name and person and reputation did not suffice. Nothing, of course, could greatly mitigate the painfulness of having to make such a request. Yet the sense of asking the father of her darling did console her for her suffering.

Her red round cheeks did, in fact, become a shade less rosy, and in her forget-me-not blue eyes shimmered a tear or two.

Crammon laid down his knife and fork. "You misjudge me, countess," he said with the melancholy of a Tartuffe. "You misjudge me gravely. Never in my life have I loaned out money—neither at interest nor out of friendship. Nothing could move me to change my principle. You probably fancy me well off. That is a most astonishing error, countess. I may give that impression, but you must not draw false inferences. I have had the art of thrift and frugality, that is all. I have been careful in the choice of my associates—men as well as women. If ever I had two invitations, one from the East and one from the West, and the Eastern invitation was issued by an unquestionably wealthier source, my decision was immediate and unhesitating. Thus I was guarded from scruples and regrets. All that I call my own is a little farm in Moravia that yields a most modest revenue—a little grain, a little fruit,

and an old ramshackle house in Vienna with a few sticks of worm-eaten furniture, which is guarded for me by two rare pearls of the female sex. No one, countess, I assure you, has ever before made the quaint mistake of asking me for money. No one."

Sadly the countess leaned her head upon her hand.

"But my conscience would forbid my acquiescence in this case even had I the ability," Crammon continued morosely. "I would never forgive myself for having been the banker of the follies that are perpetrated here, or the financier of mad extravagance. No, no, countess. Let us talk of more cheerful things."

He was still up when, at midnight, he heard a tapping at his door. Letitia entered. She sat down beside him, and said to him with a wide-eyed gentle look: "It wasn't nice of you, Bernard, to treat auntie so cruelly. Neither you nor I can let a thing like that go. Are you stingy? For heaven's sake, Bernard, don't tell me that you're stingy! Look me in the eyes, and tell me if such a thing is possible. My dear, I'd have to disown you!"

She laughed and put her arms about his neck, pulled his hair and kissed the tip of his nose, and was, in a word, so arch and so irresistible that Crammon's cast-iron principles were fatally shattered. He revoked his refusal and promised to pay Letitia's debts.

Once again the breath and speech of a woman had power over him. But it was late, and the sweetness was shot with pain. For he was no more the robber but the victim. Ah, it was time to practise modesty and renunciation. No longer did one bite into a juicy pear. No longer did one eat; one was eaten.

Letitia determined to go to Berlin. After some vain refusals, Crammon consented to accompany her.

XXV

In spite of the warmth of the room Johanna sat wrapped in her cloak.

Amadeus Voss told her a story: "I know of a holy priest who lived in France in the seventeenth century and whose name was Louis Gaufridy. In those days the people still believed in magic and witchcraft, and that was well, since it served as an antidote to godless desires. To-day a few chosen spirits believe in magic again, and thus exorcize the evil spirit which is called science. Louis Gaufridy was considered the most devout man of his age. Not even his enemies denied that. In a convent which he served as father confessor, there was a nun who was called Madeleine de la Palud. This woman's imagination had embraced the Saviour under the aspect of the flesh, and the chronicles say that she had fed her evil desires upon His picture. This fact was written in her troubled looks, and the priest Gaufridy saw the truth and desired to liberate her through the grace of confession. But the demons sealed her lips and hardened her heart. They took possession of her, and the devils Asmodeus and Leviathan spoke through her. She who had hitherto been chaste had unchaste hallucinations, and accused the priest of having bewitched and misused her. Gaufridy was arrested and examined under torture and confronted with Madeleine. He swore by God and all His saints that he was being falsely accused. But the nun, misled by her hallucinations, swore that he was the prince of magicians, that he had misused her during confession, and had poisoned her soul. Before the judges the priest implored Madeleine to give up her delusion and confess the truth; but she was incapable of truth. Beside herself, she cried out that he had pledged himself to the devil in his own blood and that he had forced her to do the same. Thereupon he was cruelly tortured once more, and publicly burned on the Dominican's Square at Aix."

Johanna smiled a tormented smile.

"That is the story of Madeleine de la Palud," said Voss, "the profound story concerning the heavenly and the earthly Eros and the Fata Morgana of the senses. Who was the guilty one? Madeleine, who had blasphemed and defiled the image of the Saviour with fleshly desires, or Gaufridy, who had plunged her into a consciousness of sin by creating in her the division between spirit and flesh? For that he had to suffer, as every one has to suffer. But what I feel, and what our sources indeed hint at, is that he was seized by a mysterious and terrible love for Madeleine de la Palud even when she was thrusting him into the torture chamber, and that this love mitigated for him even the horrors of his fiery death. In every human breast love arises but once and for but one being. All else is misunderstanding, and a sterile attempt to resuscitate what is dead. It leads to falsehood and to torture."

Johanna smiled a tormented smile.

"I walked with a harlot yesterday," Voss said suddenly, and stared into space.

Johanna did not stir.

"It is an old horror that draws me toward harlots," he said in a hollow voice. "Sometimes when I walked the streets penniless, sick with longing, utterly deserted, I gazed after them and envied the men who could go with them. It is an old feeling and springs from a deep source. I cannot get rid of it, least of all now that I err in the darkness and the ground is melting under my feet."

"You talk and talk," said Johanna, and arose. "If I had learned to speak I could tell you what you . . . do!"

"I suffer in the flesh," he answered, and his glance burned her.

Twice she walked up and down the room. She hated her own tread, her own perceptions, and her own thoughts. She had so deep a longing for some human touch, some friendly,

handsome, kindly word, that she would not admit even to herself how far it might lead her. She only had a dim vision of herself sitting in that rear room in Stolpische Street, waiting for Christian many hours, whole nights, it mattered not how long, but just to wait and to be there at his coming, to smile with her lips though her heart were weeping—she knew that condition so well—without explanation or confessions or complaints, as is the custom among well-bred people who settle their inner difficulties in silence and alone. Just to be there and nothing else, in order that the temperature of her heart might rise by a few degrees.

But to plan or undertake or hope for anything from any source was so criminal, it seemed, and so stupid. An empty thing—like a hungry bird picking at painted grains of wheat.

"You told me the other day that you weren't able to pay your rent. Permit me to help you out." She spoke in her frugal, pointed way, and with an angular gesture placed some money on the table. "Do not speak. Just this once, please do not speak."

He looked at her devouringly, and laughed with a jeer.

She stood very cold and still. He kissed her.

She endured it like one to whose throat a knife is put.

XXVI

When she arrived in Stolpische Street it was seven o'clock in the evening. Christian was not at home, and she waited.

She lit the lamp, sat down beside the table, and did not move. After a while, since the chill of the unheated room penetrated through her cloak and even her frock, she got up and walked up and down. Sometimes she lightly touched the objects on the table—a notebook, or a dusty ink-well. She let down the shades, and saw the silly pictures with which they were adorned.

As on that other occasion she heard the house. It was full of rumours and whispers, and oppressed her fatefully.

Swift, violent knocks at the door resounded. She started and then hastened to open it. A boy stood before her. His condition made her shudder. His clothes were spattered over and over with mud. Here and there, about his knees and on his chest, the mud had caked and formed a thick crust. His head was bare. His coal-black hair, which was also muddy, hung down. His face had an utter bleached whiteness, such as Johanna had never seen upon a human face. No drop of blood seemed left beneath his skin.

Limping a little, he passed by Johanna and entered the room. His movements were mechanical and trance-like. The volitional impulse always far antedated the action it produced.

"I am Michael Hofmann," he said, and his teeth chattered.

Johanna did not know him and had not heard of him. She thought she must be dealing with a madman. In her fear she did not leave the door. She expected him to attack her at any moment, and listened for some chance step in the hall or yard. She wanted to flee, but she was afraid to move. When the boy came into the circle of the lamplight, a sigh which ended in a broken cry escaped her, so terrible was the expression in his eyes.

He stopped, and looked about him. He was obviously seeking Christian Wahnschaffe; but in the act of gazing he forgot to look, and his glance became a stare. He grasped the back of a chair. Exhaustion seemed to overtake him. When he was about to sit down, he reeled and half-whirled about, and would have fallen but for the support of the back of the chair. Now Johanna saw clearly that he was neither mad nor drunk. He was a human being who had been robbed of strength and speech and almost vision and consciousness by an experience of the supremest horror. Not only his shaking limbs, not only the whiteness of his face betrayed the fact, but the atmosphere that surrounded him.

Gently she closed the door. Hesitatingly she approached the chair upon which he seemed now wedged fast. She dared to ask no question. Gnawing her lip, she suppressed a feeling that welled up hotly within her. She felt herself shrink and become thin and shadowy. She seemed suddenly to have lost the very right to breathe.

Every passing second heightened her unspeakable consternation. Her limbs trembled. She sat down on the other side of the room. The lad had his back turned to her, and she observed that his body began to twitch. She saw it by the creases in his coat and his arms, which were hanging down. It was like an endless convulsion. The helplessness which she felt in the face of this unknown tragedy caused her an almost physical pain, and inspired her with self-disgust and self-contempt. Her soul seemed steeped in blackness, shredded and crushed. While she suffered so, a desire came over her, a defiant and struggling desire, as for something ultimate to lay hold upon in life. It was the desire to see how Christian would take the terrible thing in which he was, to all appearances, implicated. Would he let it slide from him with his old elegant smoothness? Would he let it be shattered against that impenetrability against which all her life and fate had been shattered? Or would he be that other who was frank and changed and had wrought a miracle upon himself and upon all others except herself—who was incapable of faith out of shame and despair and desolation and an inner hurt? But if he was that other and changed man, if he approved himself in this supreme instance, then she need torment herself so cruelly no more. For in that case, what did her little sorrows matter? Then she must be humble, and wait for her summons, though she did not know what it would be.

And she waited, stretching out her slim throat like a thirsty deer.

XXVII

That "no, never, nevermore," had driven Christian about without another thought. On this day he forgot that Karen was sick unto death.

As he was coming home that night it was raining. Nevertheless there were groups of people in front of the houses. Some uncommon event had brought them out of their rooms.

He had had no umbrella, and was wet to the skin. In the doorway, too, stood people who lived in the house. They whispered excitedly. When they saw him they became silent, stepped aside, and let him pass.

Their faces frightened him. He looked at them. They were silent. Terror fell on his chest like a lump of ice.

He went on. He was about to go up to Karen's flat, but reconsidered and went toward the court. He wanted to be alone in his room for a while. Several people followed him. Among them was the wife of Gisevius and her son, a young man whose behaviour was marked by the well-defined class-consciousness of the organized worker.

Christian did not even observe that the window of his room was lit. He walked close to the wall; he was so wet. Opening the door, he saw Johanna and the boy. He did not at once recognize Michael, who sat turned aside. He nodded to Johanna in surprise. The tense and glittering look which she turned upon him made him start. He reached the table and recognized Michael Hofmann. He grew pale, and had to hold on to the table's edge.

The door was still open, and in the dim light of the hall were crowded the five or six people who had followed him. It was not insolence that brought them to the threshold. They had been disquieted by rumours, and thought that he could give them some information.

Christian put his hand in the lad's shoulder, and asked:

"Where have you been, Michael? Where have you come from?"

The boy continued rigid and silent.

"Where is Ruth?" Christian asked, as by a supreme effort.

Michael arose. His eyes were unnaturally wide open. With both arms he made a large, obscure gesture. Horror shook him so that a gurgling sound which arose in his throat was throttled before it reached his lips. Suddenly he swayed and reeled and fell like a log. He lay on the floor.

Christian kneeled down and put his arms about him. He lifted him a little, and gathered the muddy, trembling boy close to him. He bent down his face, and learned an unheard-of thing from the beseeching, horror-stricken glance that sought him as from fathomless depths. Passionately he pressed Michael's body against his own, which was so wet but no longer aware of its wetness. He pressed the boy to his heart, as though he would open to him his breast as a shelter, and the boy, too, clung to Christian with all his might. The convulsive rigidity relaxed, and from that unbelievably emaciated body there broke forth a sobbing like the moan of a wind of doom.

The boy knew. No one could be so shattered but one who knew.

Then Christian kissed the stony, dirty, tear-stained face.

Johanna saw it, and the timid people at the door saw it also.

INQUISITION

I

Edgar Lorm was accustomed to taking his meals without Judith, so he was not surprised at her absence to-day and sat down alone.

The meal was served: a lobster, breast of veal with salad and three kinds of vegetables, a pheasant with compote, a large boule de Berlin, pineapple and cheese. He drank two glasses of red Bordeaux and a pint of champagne.

He ate this excessively rich meal daily with the appetite of a giant and the philosophical delight of a gourmet. As he was lighting his heavy Havana cigar over his coffee, he heard Judith's voice. She burst in, perturbed to the utmost.

"What has happened, dear child?" he asked.

"Something frightful," she gasped, and sank into a chair.

Lorm arose. "But what has happened, my dear?"

She panted. "I haven't been feeling at all well for several days. I got the doctor to look me over, and he says I'm pregnant."

A sudden light came into Lorm's eyes. "I don't think that's such a terrible misfortune." He had difficulty in concealing his surprised delight. "On the contrary, I think it's a blessed thing. I hardly dared hope for it. Indeed, my dear wife, I don't know what I wouldn't give to have it true."

Judith's eyes glittered as she replied: "It shall never be—never, never! I shall not remind you of our agreement; I shall not lay the blame on you if this terrible thing has really happened. I can't believe it yet. It would make me feel bewitched. But you are mistaken if you count on any yielding

on my part, any womanly weakness, or any awakening of certain so-called instincts. Never, never! My body shall remain as it is—mine, all mine. I won't have it lacerated and I won't share it. It's the only thing I still call my own. I won't have a strange creature take possession of it, and I refuse to age by nine years in nine months. And I don't want some mocking image of you or me to appear. Never, never! The horror of it! Be careful! If you take delight in something I detest so, the horror will extend itself to you! "

Lorm stretched himself a little, and regarded her with amazement. There was nothing for him to say.

She went into her bedroom and locked the door. Lorm gave orders that no visitors were to be admitted. Then he went into the library, and spent the time until eight reading a treatise on the motions of the fixed stars. But often he raised his eyes from the book, for he was preoccupied not so much with the secrets of the heavens as with very mundane and very depressing things. He got up and went to the door of Judith's room. He listened and knocked, but Judith did not answer. At the end of half an hour he returned and knocked again. She knew his humble way of seeking admission, but she did not answer. The door remained locked.

At the end of each half hour, which he spent in reading about the stars, he returned to the door and knocked. He called her name. He begged her to have some confidence in him and hear what he had to say. He spoke in muffled tones, so as not to arouse the attention of the servants. He asked her not to blame him for his premature delight. He saw his error and deplored it. Only let her listen to him. He promised her gifts—an antique candlestick, a set of Dresden china, a frock made by Worth. In vain. She did not answer.

Three days passed. An oppressive atmosphere rested on the household. Lorm slunk through the rooms like an intimidated guest. He humiliated himself so far as to send Judith a letter by the housekeeper, who took in her meals and who alone had

access to her. At night he returned to the door again and again, placed his lips against it, and implored her. There was no stirring of anger in him, no impulse to clench his fist and break down the door. Judith knew that. She was beating her fish.

She knew that she could go any length.

This man had been the idol of a whole nation. He had been spoiled by fame, by the friendship of distinguished people, by the kindness of fate and all the amenities of life. His very whims had been feared; a frown of his had swept all opposition aside. Now he not only endured the maltreatment of this woman whom he had married after long solitariness and hesitation; he accepted insult and humiliation like the just rewards of some guilt. Weary of fame, appreciation, friendship, success, and domination, he seemed to lust after mortification, the reversal of all things, and the very voluptuousness of pain.

Quite late on the third evening he was summoned to the telephone by Wolfgang Wahnschaffe. The breach between Wolfgang and Judith that had followed his first visit forbade his visiting the house.

He begged Lorm for an interview on neutral ground. The occasion, he said, was most pressing. Lorm asked for details. The bitter and excited answer was that the question concerned Christian. Some common proceeding against him, some decision and plan, some protective measures were absolutely necessary. The family must be saved from both danger and inconceivable disgrace.

At this point Lorm interrupted him. "I feel rather sure that my wife will prove quite unapproachable in the matter. And what could I do more than the merest stranger?" Urged anew, he finally promised to meet Wolfgang at luncheon in a restaurant on Potsdamer Street.

He had scarcely hung up the receiver when Judith entered. She had on a négligée of dark-green velvet trimmed with fur.

The garment had a long train. Her hair was carefully dressed, a cheerful smile was on her lips, and she stretched out both hands to Lorm.

He was happy, and took her hands and kissed them.

She put her arms about his neck and her lips close to his ear: "Everything is all right. The doctor is a donkey. I did you wrong. Everything is nice now, so be nice!"

"If only you are satisfied," said Lorm, "nothing else matters."

She nestled closer to him, and coaxed with eyes and mouth and hands: "How about the antique candlestick, darling, and the frock by Worth? Are you going to get them for me? And am I not to have my set of Dresden china?"

Lorm laughed. "Since you admit that you wronged me, the price of reconciliation is a trifle high," he mocked. "But don't worry. You shall have everything."

He breathed a kiss upon her forehead. That disembodied tenderness was the symbol of the ultimate paralysis of his energy before her and men and the world. And from day to day this paralysis grew more noticeable, and bore all the physical symptoms of an affection of the heart.

II

An identical account in all newspapers gave the first public notification that a murder had been committed:

"At six o'clock yesterday a foreman and a workman from Brenner's factory found the headless body of a girl in a shed on Bornholmer Street. The body was held by ropes in an unnatural position, and was so tightly wedged in among beams, boards, ladders, barrows, and refuse, that the police officers who were immediately summoned had the greatest difficulty in disentangling their gruesome find. The news spread rapidly through the neighbourhood, and a rumour that increased in definiteness pointed to the body of the murdered girl as that of the sixteen-year-old Ruth Hofmann residing in Stolpische Street. A notification of her disappearance had been lodged at police headquarters several days ago. The theory that it was she who was the victim of a murder of

unparalleled bestiality became a certainty some hours later. A mason's wife found in the mortar-pit of a building lot on Bellermann Street the severed head, which proved to belong to the body and was identified by several inhabitants of the house on Stolpische Street as that of Ruth Hofmann. Except for stockings and shoes, the body was entirely naked, and its mutilations indicated felonious assault. There is at present no trace of the murderer. But the investigations are being present with all possible care and energy, and it is warmly to be desired that the inhuman brute may soon be turned over to the ministers of justice."

III

In the little rear room he had now been sleeping for fourteen hours. The widow Engelschall determined to go to him.

She passed through the half-dark passage-way in which the supplies were stored. Hams and smoked sausages dangled from the ceiling. On the floor stood kegs with sardines, herrings, and pickled gherkins. There were shelves filled with glasses of preserved fruit. The place smelled like a shop.

She stopped, took a little gherkin out of an open keg, and swallowed it without chewing.

The bell of the front-door rang. A sluttish creature, broom in hand, became visible at the end of the passage, and called out to the widow Engelschall that Isolde Schirmacher had come with an important message. "Let her wait," the widow Engelschall growled. Softly she went into the small room in which Niels Heinrich was sleeping.

He lay on a mattress. A bluish flannel coverlet was over him. His hairy chest was bare; his naked feet protruded. The room was so small that not even a chest of drawers could have been squeezed in. Heaps of malodorous, soiled linen lay in the corners. Tools were scattered about the floor—a plane, a hammer, a saw. Old newspapers increased the litter, and on nails in the wall hung dirty clothes, ties, and a couple of overcoats. On the walls red splotches showed where bedbugs had been killed. On the table stood a candlestick with a piece of candle, an empty beer bottle, and a half empty whiskey bottle.

He lay on his back. The muscles of his face had snapped under an inhuman tension. Between his reddish eyebrows vibrated three dark furrows. His skin was the tint of cheese. On his neck and forehead were beads of sweat. His lids looked like two black holes. The slim, red little beard on his chin moved as he breathed—moved like a separate and living thing, a watchful, hairy insect.

He snored loudly. A bubble of saliva rose now and then from the horrible opening of his lips that showed his decayed teeth.

The widow Engelschall had had plans which had seemed easy to execute outside. Now she dared do nothing. Last night she had stood above him as she stood now. He had begun to murmur in his sleep, and she had hurried out in terror.

It buzzed in her head: What had he done with the two thousand marks which he had embezzled from the builder? She distrusted his assertion that he had spent it all on the cashier of the Metropolitan Moving Picture Theatre. To make up a part of the money and prevent his arrest, she had had to pawn all her linen, two chests of drawers, the furnishings of her waiting-room, and also to mortgage a life insurance policy. Her letter to Privy Councillor Wahnschaffe had not even been answered.

She didn't believe that he had wasted so much good money on that slut. He must have a few hundreds lying about somewhere. The thought gave her no rest. It was dangerous to let him notice her suspicion; but she could risk entering the room while he slept, burrowing in his clothes, and slipping her hand under his pillow.

But she stood perfectly still. In his presence she was always prepared for the unexpected. If he but opened his mouth, she trembled within. If people came to speak of him, she grew cold all over. If she stopped to think, she knew that it had always been so.

When the village schoolmaster had caught the ten-year-old boy in disgusting practices with a girl of eight, he had said: "He'll end on the gallows." When he was an apprentice, he had quarrelled over wages with his employer and threatened to strike him. The man had said: "He'll end on the gallows." When he had stolen a silver chain from the desk of the minister's wife at Friesoythe, and his mother had gone to return it, the lady had said: "He'll end on the gallows."

The memories came thick and fast. He had beaten his first mistress, fat Lola who lived in Köpnicker Street, with barbarous cruelty, because at a dance in Halensee she had winked at a postal clerk. When the girl had writhed whining on the floor, and shrieked out in her pain: "There ain't such another devil in the world!" the widow Engelschall had appealed to the enraged fellow's conscience, and had said to him: "Go easy, my boy, go easy;" but her advice had been futile. When his second mistress was pregnant, he forced her to go for treatment to an evil woman with whom he was also intimate, and the girl died of the operation. He jeered at the swinish dullness of women who couldn't do the least things right—couldn't bear and couldn't kill a brat properly. No one, fortunately, had heard this remark but the widow Engelschall. Again she had besought him: "Boy, go it a bit easier, do!"

At bottom she admired his qualities. You couldn't fool with him. He knew how to take care of himself; he could get around anybody. If only he hadn't always vented his childish rage on harmless things. The expense of it! If the fire didn't burn properly, he'd tear the oven door from its hinges; if his watch was fast or slow, he'd sling it on the floor so that it was smashed; if meat was not done to his liking, he broke plates with his knife; if a cravat balked in the tying, he'd tear it to shreds, and often his shirt too. Then he laughed his goat-like laugh, and one had to pretend to share his amusement. If he noticed that one was annoyed, he became rabid, spared nothing, and destroyed whatever he could reach.

She wondered what he lived on in ordinary times, when he had had no special piece of good luck. For he seemed always in the midst of plenty, with pockets full of money, and no hesitation to spend and treat. Sometimes he worked—four days a week or five. And he could always get work. He knew his trade, and accomplished in one day more than other workmen did in three. But usually he extended blue Monday until Saturday, and passed his time in unspeakable dives with rogues and loose women.

The widow Engelschall knew a good deal about him. But there was a great deal that she did not know. His ways were mysterious. To ask him and to receive an answer was to be none the wiser. He was always planning something, brewing something. All this commanded the widow Engelschall's profound respect. He was flesh of her flesh and spirit of her spirit. Yet her anxiety was great; and recently the cards had foretold evil with great pertinacity.

And so she hesitated, full of fear. The palish, yellow skull on the coarse, fustian pillow paralysed her. The slack flesh of her fat neck drooped and shook, as she finally bent and reached down after his coat and waistcoat, which were lying under the chair. She turned away a little so as to conceal her motions. Suddenly she felt a hand on her shoulder and shrieked.

Niels Heinrich had risen noiselessly. He stood there in his shirt, and pierced her with the yellowish flare of his glance. "What're you doing there, you old slut?" he asked with calm rage. She let the garments fall and retreated toward the door trembling. He stretched forth his arm: "Out!"

His appearance was fear-inspiring. Words died on her lips. With reeling steps she went out.

Isolde Schirmacher was still waiting in the hall. She began to weep when she gave her message: the widow Engelschall was to come to Stolpische Street without delay. Karen was very sick, was dying.

The widow Engelschall seemed incredulous. "Dying? Ah,

it ain't so easy to die. Give her my love, and say I'm coming. I'll be there in an hour."

IV

A further account appeared in the papers:

"The mystery which surrounds the murder of young Ruth Hofmann is beginning to clear up. The public will be glad to learn that the efforts of the police have brought about the apprehension of her probable slayer. The latter is Joachim Heinzen of Czernikauer Street, twenty years old, of evil reputation and apparently of not altogether responsible mind. Even before the discovery of the crime his behaviour attracted attention. Within the last few days the evidence against him has increased to the extent of justifying his arrest. When the police frankly accused him of the crime, he first broke down, but immediately thereafter resisted arrest with the utmost violence. Lodged in jail, he made a full and comprehensive confession. When asked to sign the protocol, however, he retracted his entire statement, and denied his guilt with extreme stubbornness. In his demeanour brutish stupidity alternated with remorse and terror. There can hardly be any doubt but that he is the criminal. The first formal examination by the investigating judge entrusted with the case will take place to-day. All the inhabitants of the house in Stolpische Street have been examined, among them a personality whose presence in that locality throws a curious sidelight on a widely discussed affair, in which one of the most respected families among our captains of industry is involved."

V

The hint in the last sentence caused endless talk. The name, which had considerately been left unmentioned, passed from mouth to mouth, no one knew how. The rumour reached Wolfgang Wahnschaffe. Colleagues asked him with cool amazement what his brother had to do with the murder of a Jewish girl in the slums. Even the chief of his chancellery in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned him, and questioned him with an expression that made him blanch with shame.

He wrote to his father: "I am in the position of a peaceful pedestrian who is in constant danger of a madman attacking him from behind. You are aware, dear father, that in the career I have chosen an unblemished repute is the first requisite. If my reputation and my name are to be constantly

at the public mercy of an insane eccentric, who unhappily bears that name only to stain it, the time has come to use every means, no matter how drastic, to protect oneself. We have had patience. I was for far too long a flickering little flame beside the dazzling but, as is clear now, quite deceptive radiance of Christian. Now that my whole life's happiness is at stake, as well as the honour of myself and my house, it would be the merest weakness on my part if I were to regard passively all that is happening and still likely to happen. This is likewise the opinion of my friends and of every right thinking person. Some energetic action is necessary if I am to sustain myself in the station which I have achieved, not to mention any other unpleasantness in which we may become involved. Until I hear from you, I shall try to get in touch with Judith, and take counsel with her. Although she ceased from all association with myself, in the most insulting manner and for reasons still dark to me, I believe that she will realize the seriousness of the situation."

The Privy Councillor received this letter immediately on the heels of a conference with a delegation of strikers. It was some time before the pained amazement it automatically aroused in him really penetrated his consciousness. In any other circumstances the letter's unfilial, almost impudent tone would have angered him. To-day he gave it no further thought. Swiftly he wrote a telegram in cipher to Girke and Graurock.

The reply which came by special delivery reached him the next evening at his house in Würzburg. Willibald Girke wrote:

"My dear Privy Councillor:—Although it is some time since we have had the pleasure of working under direct orders from you, yet in the hope of renewed relations between us, we have been forward-looking enough to continue our investigations, and to keep up to date in all matters concerning Herr Christian Wahnschaffe at our own risk and expense. Thanks to this efficient farsightedness which we have made our rule, we are

able to answer your question with the celerity and precision which the situation calls for.

"We proceed at once to the root of the matter, the murder of the young Jewess. We can give you the consoling assurance that there is no other connection between your son and the foul crime in question than through the warm and much discussed friendship which your son entertained for the murdered girl. Hence he is implicated as a witness, and as such will have to appear in court in due time. This painful necessity is unhappily unavoidable. Who touches pitch is defiled. His close association with proletarians necessarily involved him in such matters and in a knowledge of their affairs. It has been proved and admitted that he once visited the dwelling of the murderer Heinzen. He did so in the company of Ruth Hofmann, and on that occasion a scandalous scene is said to have taken place which was provoked by Niels Heinrich, the brother of Karen Engelschall. This Niels Heinrich is a close friend of Joachim Heinzen, has been kept under close surveillance by the police and examined, and his evidence is said to have been very serious for the accused. It is this connection with Engelschall, casual and innocent as it may be, that will be held against your son, and its disagreeable results cannot yet be absolutely estimated.

"Ruth Hofmann was seen almost daily in your son's society. Her father's flat was immediately opposite Karen Engelschall's, a circumstance which facilitated their friendship. A new party has already moved in, a certain Stübbe with his wife and three children. This Stübbe is a drunkard of the most degraded sort. He is noisy every evening, and treats his family with such cruelty that your son has already found it necessary to interfere on several occasions. We touch upon this fact to illustrate the ease with which, in these dwelling-places, comradeships are established and annoyances incurred. The former tenant, David Hofmann, was indeed peaceful and well-behaved. But he must have been in the utmost difficul-

ties, since he left for America only a few days before the murder. Although telegrams were sent after him at once, he has not been heard from. It is supposed that, for reasons of his own, he emigrated under an assumed name, since the passenger lists of all ships that have sailed within the past two weeks have been searched for his own name in vain. It is possible, moreover, that he sailed from a Dutch or British port. The authorities are investigating.

"Ruth's young brother had also disappeared for six days, and did not show up until the very evening on which the murder was discovered, when he was found in your son's room. He has remained there ever since. His state of mind is inexplicable. No urging, neither requests nor commands, could extract from him the slightest hint as to where he had passed the crucial days between Sunday and Thursday. As his silence is prolonged, it assumes a more and more mysterious aspect, and every effort is made to break it in the belief that it may be connected with the murder and may conceal important bits of evidence.

"It has not failed to be observed that your son not only gives no assistance to those who desire to question young Hofmann, but frustrates their purpose whenever he can. Since he is absent from his room during the greater part of the day, a certain Fräulein Schöntag has undertaken to watch over the boy. Recently, however, the necessity for such constant watchfulness seems to have decreased. In the absence of Fräulein Schöntag the boy Hofmann is now often left alone for hours, and only the wife of Gisevius occasionally looks in to see that he is still safely there. Nevertheless a plain clothes detective is keeping the house under close and constant observation.

"From all this it is obvious that, in assuming the care of this enfeebled boy, your son has taken upon himself a new burden, which, in view of his other responsibilities and restricted pecuniary means, will be not a little difficult to bear.

We take the liberty of making this observation, in spite of the fact that a real understanding of your son's intentions and purposes is still lacking to us as to every one.

"This concludes our report. In the hope that our thoroughness and exactness corresponds to your hopes and wishes, and in the expectation of such further directions as you may be pleased to give us, We beg to remain, Most respectfully yours, Girke and Graurock. Per W. Girke."

Albrecht Wahnschaffe wandered through the rooms of the old house, followed by the dog Freya. To avoid the most crushing of his thoughts, he summoned up the face of the workingman who had been the spokesman of yesterday's deputation. He recalled with great exactness the brutal features—the protruding chin, the thin lips, the black moustache brushed upward, the cold, sharp glance, the determined expression. And in this face he saw no longer the visage of this particular man who had come to him on this particular and accidental errand, but of a whole world, mysterious, inevitable, terrible, full of menace and coldness and determination.

The energy and circumspection which he had shown in his conference with the delegates seemed to him monstrously futile. The power of no individual would avail in the conflict with that world.

He did not want to think—not of the letter of the private detective agency, nor of its horrible revelations, which seemed dim and turbid scenes of an immeasurably alien life, and yet the life of his son whom he had loved and whom he still loved. Ah, no, he did not want to think of the innumerable lowly and ugly and horrible events which whirled past his mind in a ghostly panorama—the rooms, the courts, the houses full of groaning, wretched bodies. To prevent himself from thinking of these, he turned the pages of a book, hunted through a drawer filled with old letters, and wandered tirelessly from room to room, followed by the dog Freya.

Fleeing from these images, he encountered others that con-

cerned the realm of his work, in which the hopes of all his life were rooted and had ripened, in which the very wheels of his existence had been set in motion. He saw the great shops desolate, the furnaces extinguished, the trip-hammers still, and from a thousand doors and windows arms in gestures of command stretched out toward him who had thought himself the master of them all. It was not the first time that a strike had interfered with the intricate organization of the works. But it was the first time that the feeling came to him that struggle was useless and the end imminent.

And the question rose to his lips: "Why have you done this to me?" And this question he addressed to Christian, as though Christian were guilty of the demands of those who had once been willing slaves, of the empty halls, the extinguished furnaces, the silent hammers—guilty, somehow, because of his presence in those rooms amid harlots and murderers, mad and sick men, and in all those haunts of human vermin. Rage quivered up in him, one of those rare attacks that all but robbed him of consciousness. His eyes seemed filled with blood; he sought a sacrifice and a creature to make atonement, and observed the dog gnawing at a rug. He took a bamboo stick, and beat the animal so that it whined piteously—beat it for minutes, until his arm fell exhausted.

Calm came, and he felt remorse and shame. But the core of his anger remained in his heart, and he carried it about with him like a hidden poison. The gnawing and burning did not cease, and he knew that it would not cease until he had had a reckoning with Christian, until Christian had given some accounting of himself as man to man, son to father, criminal to judge.

The rage corroded his soul. Yet what was the way out? How could he reach Christian? How summon him to an accounting? No active step but would betray his dignity. Was he doomed merely to wait? For weeks and months? The silent rage gnawed at his very life.

VI

Johanna's absence made Amadeus Voss more and more anxious. Using the methods of a spy, he had discovered that she had left the house of her relatives quite suddenly. On the day after her last visit to Zehlendorf, she had come home silent and sorrowful. Her absence had caused worry, since every one was now thinking of murders and mysterious disappearances. She had refused to tell where she had passed the night, and had simply declared that she was going away altogether. She had resisted all questions and arguments in silence and had quickly packed her possessions. Then a motor car, which she had ordered, had appeared, and with formal words of thanks she had said good-bye. She had told her cousin, with whom she was more intimate than with the rest, that she needed a period of concentration and loneliness, and was moving into a furnished room. She begged that no one try to seek her out. It would be useless and only drive her farther. Indeed, she had threatened more desperate things if she were not left in peace. Nevertheless her frightened kinsmen had followed her track, and had discovered that she had rented a room in Kommandanten Street. But since she was lodging with a respectable woman and seemed guilty of nothing exciting or dangerous, her desire was finally respected, and all vain speculation as to her incomprehensible action abandoned.

These details had been recounted to Voss by a maid whom he had bribed with five marks. With tense face and inflamed heart he went home to consider what he should do. He found a letter from Johanna, who wrote: "I do not know how things will be between us in the future. At this moment I am incapable of any decision. I am not in the least interested either in myself or in my fate, and I have weighty reason for that feeling. Don't seek me out. I am in Stolpische Street almost all day long, but don't seek me out if you have any interest in me or if you want me to have the least interest

in you in the future. I don't want to see you; I can't bear to listen to you at present. The experience I have had has been too dreadful and too unexpected. You would find me changed in a way that you would not like at all. Johanna."

Pale with rage, he immediately rode into the city as far as the station on Schönhauser Avenue. When he reached Stolpische Street it was nine o'clock in the evening. Frau Gisevius told him that Fräulein Schöntag had left half an hour ago. He looked into Christian's room, and saw an unknown boy sitting at the table. He drew the woman aside, and asked her who it was. She was amazed that he didn't know, and told him that it was the brother of the murdered girl. She added that Wahnschaffe was quite unlike himself since the tragedy. He walked about like a lost soul. If you talked to him he either didn't answer at all or answered at random. He didn't touch his breakfast which she brought him every morning. Often he would stand for half an hour on the same spot with lowered head. She was afraid he was losing his mind. A couple of days ago she had met him in Rhinower Street, and there, in bright daylight, he had been talking out loud to himself so that the passers-by had laughed. Yesterday he had left without a hat, and her little girl had run after him with it. He had stared at the child for a while as if he didn't understand. Shortly after that he had returned home with several of his friends. Suddenly she had heard him cry out and had rushed into his room. She had found him on his knees before the others, sobbing like a little child. Then he had struck the floor in his despair and had cried out that this thing could not be and dared not be true, that it wasn't possible and he couldn't endure it. Fräulein Schöntag had been there too. But she had been silent and so had the others. They had just sat there and trembled. This attack had been caused by some young men imprudently telling him that this was the day set for the official examination and autopsy of Ruth's body. He had wanted to hasten to the court. They

had restrained him with difficulty, and finally had to assure him that he would be too late, that everything would be over. All night long he had walked up and down in his room, while Michael had been lying on the leather sofa. The two hadn't exchanged one word all night. She had slipped out of her room and listened repeatedly—not a syllable. At five o'clock in the morning Fräulein Schöntag had come; at seven Lamprecht and another student. They had persuaded him to go out to Treptow with them to spend the day. He had neither consented nor refused, and they had just dragged him along. Friends of Ruth Hofmann had come too and staid till noon—a woman and a young man. They sometimes came in the evening too, after Fräulein Schöntag had gone, so that Michael need not be alone. No one knew what was going to be done with the boy. His condition hadn't changed in the least. He hadn't even undressed, and if Fräulein Schöntag hadn't known just how to get around him, he would not even have let anybody brush the mud from his clothes or wash his hands and face. Sometimes a red-haired gentleman would come to see the boy. She had heard that he was a baron and a friend of Wahnschaffe. This gentleman had brought a chessboard day before yesterday, because some one had said that Michael knew how to play chess and had often played with his sister. But when the chessmen had been set up, Michael had only shuddered and had not touched them. The board was still there on the table. Herr Voss could go and see for himself.

The woman would have gossipped on and on. But Voss left her with a silent nod. He had grown thoughtful. What he had heard of Christian had made him thoughtful. Careless of his direction, he turned toward Exerzier Square. He brooded and doubted. His imagination refused to see Christian as the woman had pictured him. It seemed an absolute contradiction of the possible, a mockery of all experience. Grief, such grief—and Christian? Despair, such despair—and Christian? The world was rocking on its foundations. Some mystery must

be behind it all. Under the pressure of huge forces the very elements may change their character, but it was inconceivable to him that blood should issue from a stone, or a heart be born where none had been.

Forced back against his will, he returned to Stolpische Street. Suddenly he saw Johanna immediately in front of him. He called out to her; she stopped and nodded, and showed no surprise. But his hasty, whispered questions left her silent. Her face was of a transparent pallor. At the door of the house she stopped and considered. Then she walked back into the court to the window of Christian's room. She wanted to look in, but a hanging had been drawn. She hurried into the hall, rang the bell, and exchanged some words with Frau Gisevius. Then she came back. "I must go upstairs," she said, "I must see how Karen is." She did not indicate that Voss was to wait. He waited with all the more determination. From the dwellings about he heard music, laughter, the crying of children, the dull whirr of a sewing-machine. At last Johanna came back and returned to the street at his side. She said in a helpless tone: "The poor woman will hardly outlive the night, and Christian isn't at home. What is to be done?"

He did not answer.

"You must understand what is happening to me," Johanna said, softly and insistently.

"I understand nothing," Voss replied dully. "Nothing—except that I suffer, suffer beyond endurance."

Johanna said harshly: "You don't count."

They were near the Humboldt Grove. It was cold, but Johanna sat down on a bench. She seemed wearied; exertions hurt her delicate body like wounds. Shyly Voss took her hand, and asked: "What is it, then?"

"Don't," she breathed, and withdrew her hand. After a long silence she said: "People always thought him insensitive. Some even said that that was the reason for his success with

all who came near him. It was a nice theory. I myself never believed it. Most theories are wrong; why should this one have been right? There is so much vain talk about people; it is all painful and futile, both when it asserts and when it denies. His society wasn't, I grant you, spiritually edifying. If one was deeply moved by something, one somehow, instinctively, hid it from him and felt a sense of embarrassment. And now—this! You can't imagine it. And how am I to describe it? All the time, that first evening while he was taking care of Michael, he hadn't yet been told anything. At nine or half-past he went up to Karen's, intending to come back in an hour, but he came earlier. There were people loitering in the yard, and they told him. Then he came into the room, quite softly. He came in and . . ." She took out a handkerchief, pressed it to her eyes, and wept very gently.

Voss let her cry for a little while. Then he asked very tensely: "He came in and——? And what?"

Johanna kept her eyes covered, and went on: "You had the feeling: This is the end for him, the end of all content, of smiles and laughter—the end. In fifteen minutes his face had aged by twenty years. I looked at it for just a moment; then my courage failed me. You may think it fantastic, but I tell you the whole room was one pain, the air was pain and so was the light. It's the truth. Everything hurt; everything one thought or saw hurt. But he was absolutely silent, and his expression was like that of one who was straining his eyes to read some illegible script. And that was the most painful thing of all."

She fell silent and Voss did not break this silence. Enviously and rancorously he reflected: "We shall have to convince ourselves that blood can issue from a stone; we must see and hear and test." Deliberately he fortified his will to doubt. The explanations which he gave in his own mind were of an unworthy character. Not to provoke Johanna he feigned to

share her faith; and yet there was something about her story that stirred his vitals and made him afraid.

Johanna needed some support. She froze in her new freedom; she distrusted her strength to bear it. With a touch of dread and longing she wondered that no one dragged her back by force into the comfort of a sheltered, care-free, secure life.

She was not sorry to have Amadeus walking at her side. Ah, it was inconsistent and weak and faithless to one's own self, but there was such a horror in being alone. Yet her gesture of farewell seemed utterly final when they reached the house in Kommandanten Street where she lived. Amadeus Voss, suspecting her weakness and her melancholy, accompanied her to the dark stairs, and there grasped her with such violence as though he meant to devour her. She merely sighed.

At that moment an irresistible desire for motherhood welled up in her. She did not care through whose agency, nor whether his kiss inspired disgust or delight. She wanted to become a mother—to give birth to something, to create something, not to be so empty and cold and alone, but to cling to something and seem more worthy to herself and indispensable to another being. Had not this very man who held her like a beast of prey spoken of the yearning of the shadow for its body? Suddenly she understood that saying.

Sombre and searching and strong was the look she gave him when they stepped out upon the street again. Then she went with him.

VII

Karen was still alive in the morning. Death had a hard struggle with her. Late at night she had once more fought herself free of its embrace; now she lay there, exhausted by the effort. Her arms, her hands, her breasts were covered with sores filled with pus. Many had broken open.

Three women rustled through the room—Isolde Schirmacher, the widow Spindler, and the wife of a bookbinder who lived

in the rear. They whispered, fetched things back and forth, waited for the physician and for the end.

Karen heard their whispers and their tread with hatred. She could not speak; she could scarcely make herself understood; but she could still hate. She heard the screeching and rumbling in the flat that had been the Hofmanns' and was now the Stübbes'. The drunkard's rising in the morning was as baleful to his wife and children as his going to bed at night. All the misery that he caused penetrated the wall, and aroused in Karen memories of equal horrors in dim and distant years.

Yet for her there was really but one pain and one misery—Christian's absence. For days he had paid her only short visits; during the last twenty-four hours, none at all. Dimly she knew of the murder of the Jewish girl, and dimly felt that Christian was changed since then; but she felt so terribly desolate without him that she tried not to think of that. His absence was like a fire in which her still living body was turned to cinders. It cried out at her. In the midst of the moaning of her agony she admonished herself to be patient, raised her head and peered, let it drop back upon the pillows, and choked in the extremity of her woe.

The door opened and she gave a start. It was Dr. Voltolini, and her face contorted itself.

There was little that the physician could do. The complications that had appeared and had affected the lungs destroyed every vestige of hope. Nothing was left to do but ease her pain by increasing the doses of morphine. "And why save such a life," Dr. Voltolini was forced to reflect, as he saw the terrible aspect of the woman still fighting death, "a life so complete and superfluous and unclean?"

It was the third occasion on which he had not found Christian here, yet he felt the old need of some familiar talk with him. He himself was a reserved man. To initiate a stranger into the secrets of his fate had been to him, hereto-

fore, an unfamiliar temptation. But in Christian's presence that temptation assailed him strongly and he suffered from it; and this was especially true since he had witnessed an apparently meaningless scene.

A journeyman of her father of whom she was fond had given Isolde Schirmacher a ring with an imitation ruby. Near the kitchen door she had shown Christian the ring in her delight. Dr. Voltolini was just coming out of the sick room. She took the ring from her finger, let the worthless stone sparkle in the light, and asked Christian whether it wasn't wonderful. And Christian had smiled in his peculiar way and had answered: "Yes, it is very beautiful." The widow Spindler, who stood in the kitchen door, had laughed a loud laugh. But an expression of such gratitude had irradiated the girl's face that, for a moment, it had seemed almost lovely.

On the stairs the widow Engelschall met Dr. Voltolini. She stopped him and asked him his opinion of Karen's condition. He shrugged his shoulders and told her there was no hope. It was a question of hours.

The widow Engelschall had long had her suspicions of Karen. Whenever she entered the room Karen grew restless, avoided her glance, and pulled the covers up to her chin. The widow knew what it was to have a bad conscience. She scented a mystery and determined to fathom it. There was no time to lose. If she hesitated now she might be too late and regret it forever after. Undoubtedly the secret was that Wahnschaffe had given her money, which, according to an old habit, she kept concealed about her person in an old stocking or chemise or even sewn up in the mattress. All the money that man had couldn't have just vanished. He had probably put aside a few dozen thousand-mark notes or some securities. And who else should have them but Karen? If one put two and two together, considered his craziness and her behaviour, the matter seemed pretty clear, and the thing to do now was to prevent mischief. For if she didn't happen

to be present at the moment of Karen's death, all sorts of people would be about, and the treasure would slip into the pocket of God knows who. You couldn't read the theft in the thief's face. These were the things that presented themselves very strongly to the widow Engelschall on her way to Stolpische Street.

Karen had her own presentiment regarding her mother's thoughts. As her illness progressed her fear for the pearls rose and rose. They no longer seemed safe upon her body. She might lose consciousness and people might handle her and discover them. These fears disturbed her sleep. She often awakened with a start, stared wildly, and smothered a scream in her throat. She had accustomed herself to keep her hands under the covers, and her grasp of the pearls became mechanically convulsive whenever her senses sank into sleep or swoon. A frightful nightmare which she had, presented to her all the possibilities of danger. People came. Whoever wanted to, simply stepped into her room. She couldn't prevent it; she could not get up and latch the door. She guarded herself most carefully from the doctor. She trembled before his eye, and the very pores of her body seemed to cling from below to the coverlet lest he turn it suddenly back.

She let the pearls wander about—now under her pillow, now under the sheet, sometimes upon her naked breast where they touched the open wounds. Becoming aware of this contact, she addressed herself with the cruel mockery of sombre pain: "What's left of you? What are you now? A leprous carrion—ruined and done for and disgusted with yourself."

Gradually she had become indifferent to the pecuniary value of the pearls, even though, during a sleepless night, in answer to her ceaseless questions, Christian had given her an insight into it which surpassed her wildest guesses. The figures were mere empty numbers to her. She shuddered, shook her head, and let the matter slide. The jewels had quite another effect on her now, and this increased in power as the old glamour

of their mere value faded. At first the pearls had been a symbol and a lamentation over her fate; their lustre glimmered to her from that other shore of life from which no breath or message had ever before floated to her. But now they no longer stirred her to envy and wrath as they had once done, but only to regret over that all of life which she had wasted and flung aside. And she had wasted her life and flung it aside, because she had known nothing of beauty or loveliness or joy or adornment or, she could truly say, of earth and heaven. She could not re-live her ruined life; there was no other, and this one was gone.

But it seemed to her, as she lay there and brooded and let her flesh disintegrate, as though her lost earth and lost heaven were given back to her in every single pearl and in the whole string. Everything was in the pearls—the children she had conceived and born and lost in hatred, the poverty-stricken, all but unfulfilled dreams, the longing she had faintly felt for some human being, the wizened love, the jaded light, the petty hopes, the small delight. Everything crystallized in the pearls and became a soul. All that she had missed and gambled or thrown away or never reached, all that had been darkened for her or driven from her by want and sorrow—all this became a soul. And to this soul she was immeasurably devoted as she lay there and brooded and let her flesh disintegrate. For this soul was the soul of Christian. His soul was in the rope of pearls. It was this that she grasped and clung to, and wanted to possess even in her grave. Her blue eyes, under the narrow forehead and the strawy dishevelled hair, had the fetish-worshipper's glow.

VIII

The widow Engelschall's first concern was to get the women out of Karen's room. To succeed she had to make her command abundantly clear. She hissed at the Schirmacher girl:

"Would you mind taking your snub-nose out of this here place?" Isolde went, but she felt sure that the old woman had evil intentions.

When the widow Engelschall approached the bed, she saw that there was but just time for her to use the last glimmer of her daughter's consciousness. If she had miscalculated—well, no harm was done, and she would be the first one, at all events, to have access to the dead woman's body. Only there must be no shilly-shallying.

She began to talk. She sat down on a chair, bent far over toward Karen, and spoke in a raised voice so that no word should escape the dying woman. She said that she had meant to bring along some pastry, but the pastry-cook's shop had been closed. In the evening, however, she intended to boil a chicken in rice or make a Styrian pudding with apple-sauce. That refreshed the stomach and improved the digestion. Sick people needed strengthening food, and one mustn't be stingy with them. Stinginess, she declared, had never been a fault of hers, anyhow. No one could say that. And she had always been ready to do the right thing by her children. It had been toil and trouble enough, and she hadn't counted on gratitude. You didn't get that in this world anyhow, no more from your children than from Tom, Dick, or Harry.

Beset by death as she was, Karen heard only the tone of this hypocritical speech. She moved her arms. An instinct told her that her mother wanted something; a last effort at reflection told her what that was, and a last impulse warned her not to betray herself. She forced herself to lie still and not to let an eyelid quiver. But the widow Engelschall knew that she was on the right track. She herself, she continued, had never striven after riches. If ever a little superfluity had come to her, she had shared it with others. You couldn't take anything into the grave with you anyhow, and though you clung to what you had like iron, it didn't do you no good in the end. So it was more sensible and nobler too to give it up,

and live to share the pleasure of the people you gave it to, and listen to their praises. Didn't Karen remember, she asked, how when that old hag of a Kränich woman had died and eighty-seven pieces of gold had been found in her straw-mattress—didn't she remember how, amid the joy, people had railed at the stingy beast? No one had shed a tear over her. They had consigned her to hell where she belonged.

Having said this, the widow Engelschall stretched out her hand, and with apparent carelessness began to feel about the pillow. The rope of pearls lay under it. She had not yet reached it; but Karen thought she had grasped it, and with feeble hands fought off the hands of her mother. Breathing stertorously, she raised herself a little, and threw herself across the pillow. The widow Engelschall murmured: "Aha, there we have it!" She was sure now. Swiftly she thrust her hand farther and pulled out an end of the rope of pearls. She uttered a dull cry. Her fat face oozed sweat and turned crimson, for she recognized at once the fabulous value of what she held. Her eyes started from their sockets, saliva dripped from her mouth. She grasped what she held more and more firmly, as Karen rested the whole weight of her body upon the pillow, stretched out her hands, dug her nails into her mother's wrists, and whined a long, piteous whine. But in spite of her ghastly display of strength she succumbed in that unequal struggle. Already the widow Engelschall, uttering a low howl, had torn the pearls from their hiding-place; she was about to flee from Karen's inarticulate screeching and blind rage and fierce moans and chattering teeth, when the door opened and Christian entered.

The women in the hall had noticed that something strange and fearful was taking place in Karen's room. The struggle between mother and daughter had not lasted long enough to give them a chance to make a decision or fight down their fear of the old woman. But they received Christian with frightened faces and pointed toward the door. They wanted to follow

him into the room; but since he paid no attention to them and closed the door behind him, they remained where they were and listened. But they heard no sound.

Christian approached Karen's bed. He had taken in what was happening. Silently he took the pearls from the old woman's hands. Wrought up and inflamed by greed as she was, she did not dare make a gesture of resistance. On his face there was an expression which beat down her boiling rage at his interference. It was a strange expression—a lordly mournfulness was in it, a proud absorption, a smile that was remote, a something estranged and penetrating and inviolable. He laid the pearls upon Karen's breast, and took both of her hands into his. She looked up to him—relieved, redeemed. Her body quivered in convulsions, but was eased as he held her hands. Freezing and icy under the touch of death, she thrust herself nearer to him, babbling, moaning, trembling in every limb, and with a hot moisture in her eyes. And he did not recoil. He did not feel any repulsion at the malodorousness of the dripping sores. That smile still on his face, he embraced her and gave her a last warmth against his breast, as though she were a little bird whom the storm had blown hither. At last she lay very quiet, without motion or sound.

And thus she died in his arms.

IX

Broken by his wild dissipations, Felix Imhof had to halt at last. His strength was at an end.

He summoned physicians, and with a smile begged for the truth. The last whom he consulted, a famous specialist, bade him be prepared for the worst, since his spinal marrow was affected. "Tubercular?" Imhof asked objectively. "Yes, exactly," was the answer.

"All right, old boy! Fifth act, last scene," he said to himself. Since fever ensued, and exhaustion alternated with violent

pain, he took to his bed, had the windows darkened and the mirrors covered, and stared into space through the long hours with the expression of a frightened child.

He had never been able to get along without people. As far back as his memory went, his life had been as crowded as a fair. He had been hail-fellow-well-met with every one; they had all clung to him, and he had taken great pains to mean something to them all and to meet their wishes. And who was left to him now? No one. Whom did he desire? No one. Who would mourn for him? No man and no woman.

"I wonder what they'll say about me when I'm gone?" he kept wondering. "Oh, yes, Imhof, they'll say, don't you recall him? Good fellow, pleasant companion, nothing slack about him, always in good spirits, always on the lookout for something new—a little touched, maybe. You must remember him. Why, he looked so and so and so. He talked like an Italian priest, wasted his money like an idiot, and drank like a fish."

And in spite of such reminders many would not remember, but shrug their shoulders and begin to talk about something else.

He had neither father nor mother, sister nor brother, no relative and, in reality, no friends. His very birth was obscure. Its mystery would never be unveiled now. Perhaps he came of the dregs of mankind, perhaps of noble blood. But this mystery had, so far as he was concerned, neither romance nor charm. Only fate, for the sake of clearness, had stamped his being thus as that of a solitary, alienated, and self-dependent creature.

He had neither root nor connection nor bond. He was himself; nothing else. A personality fashioned by its moment in time—unique and complete in itself.

There was not even a servant who was faithful to him through personal devotion or through attachment to his house. No soul belonged to him—only things for which he had paid.

He had given much unselfish devotion to artists and works of art. A beautiful poem, an excellent picture had given his mind the elasticity and his mood the serenity which had compensated him for all the weariness and flatness of his environment. But seeking now to recall the impressions that had seemed unforgettable to him, he faced emptiness. The bubbling spring was choked with stone and sand. Did art, which he had loved so truly, sustain the spirit no better than some fleeting roadside adventure? What did it lack?

From the wreck of his fortune a few treasures had remained —a painting by Mantegna, the Three Kings from the East, an early Greek statue of Dionysos, a statue by Rodin, and a still-life by Von Gogh. He had these exquisite things and several others brought into his room, and sought to lose himself in the contemplation of them. But the old happy ecstasy would not return. The colours seemed dull and the marble without warmth or life. What had passed from these things? What change had come over them?

On the table beside his bed stood an hour-glass. He watched the reddish sand, fluid and swift as water, flicker through an eye from the upper bulb into the lower. It took twelve minutes. Leaning on his arms he watched it and reversed the bulbs whenever the upper one was empty. And again his eyes had the expression of a frightened child's.

One day, as he was watching the running of the sand in the hour-glass, he said aloud to himself: "Death? What's the meaning of that? It's nonsense."

It was an absurd word and idea, and he could not grasp it or penetrate it. Scarcely had he begun to gain the slightest conception of dying when he found that that very conception started from the idea of life. One had always been in space and was to leave it now. Yet wherever one passed to, there must be space also. And one could not think the concept space without also thinking oneself. Well, then . . .

A shiver passed over him. Then he smiled avidly. He

thought of the delights that had been his—the fullness and wealth of pleasure and expectation, of ecstasy and triumph; of the feasts and revels and journeys and enterprises and games; of all the merry, multicoloured, changeful conflict. How delightful it had been to rise in the morning with one's straight limbs; how delightful that wheels whirred and newsboys shrilled and bells clanged and dogs barked; and how exquisite it had been when a young woman, ready for love, loosened her hair and dropped her garments and her white flesh gleamed like the flesh of a fruit. Ah, and the pleasant comrades and the splendid horses, and the homecomings at night, just a little drunk. In the hall one longed for the first step of the stairs; it seemed so comfortable, logical, inviting. Upstairs the windows were open, and in one of them was a bunch of flowers. At all times and in all places one felt: "I am here, in the midst of it, lord of the foam and music of life. I command and life obeys, and there will be a to-morrow and a day after to-morrow, and endless days like slender trees along an avenue." And at such moments he had felt tender toward himself and flattered by his own breath, and had fed on air and light and clouds and men and songs. And everything had been goodly to his taste—even the ugly things and the rain and the very puddles in the street. For he was alive . . . alive. . . .

He reversed the hour-glass and fell back among the pillows. His eyes became aware of a small, grey spider that crept up the purple silk of the wall-hangings. It frightened him. Suddenly the thought struck him: "It is possible, even likely, that the spider will still exist when I am gone." This reflection frightened him beyond expression, and he watched the spider's slow progress with breathless suspense.

"Is it conceivable," he thought, "that the horrible and trivial spider will be in a world from which I am gone? It is maddening. I have never believed in it and cannot believe in it—in unconsciousness and darkness, and the damp and the

earth and the worms. And the spider is to live and I am not? Not I who filled all space with my being and my vitality? Is there any philosophy or religion or conviction that is not smashed to bits against this one fact? Supposing there were someone who had the power to let me go on living as a street-sweeper, a beggar, a jail-bird, despised, deformed, absurd, impotent. It almost seems to me that I would accept life even at that price. Good God, where do such thoughts lead one? What shameful ideas are these for a man who has always insisted on cleanliness and honour! Have I ever slunk away before an affront or failed to uphold my dignity? And yet I know that I would choose life at any price. The pains of the soul? Much I care about them! I would welcome grief, disappointment, bitterness, hatred, and loss—so I could but live . . . but live. . . ."

An hour later Weikhardt was announced. Imhof considered whether he should see him. He had denied himself to all callers during the past few days, but he could not make up his mind to refuse to see the painter, whom he had always liked uncommonly well.

"Is it Eliphaz, Bildad, or Zophar who comes to comfort Job?" he addressed Weikhardt. "You remember the incident, don't you? 'They lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven.'"

Weikhardt smiled. But when his eyes had become accustomed to the semi-darkness of the room and he saw the emaciated face, his mocking impulse fled.

For a while their talk was superficial. Weikhardt told about his marriage, his work, his vain efforts after economic security, and finally gossipped a little. Imhof listened with wavering attention. Suddenly he asked with apparent equanimity: "How is that marvellous female salamander?"

"What salamander? Whom do you mean?"

"Whom should I mean? Sybil; of course! Wasn't it the maddest and wildest thing that the trivial word of a soulless creature should have brought swift decision into the slow process of my fate? Was it Providence? Was it so written in the stars?"

"I don't understand," Weikhardt murmured.

"Don't you? Didn't you know that the horrible little wooden fay called me a 'nigger,' and that I revenged myself in my characteristic way by playing a trump that lost me the whole game? I went and sought the company to which her icy scorn had sent me. I slept with a Negro woman to shame the white girl and break her vanity, at least in my imagination. Wasn't it sublime? And you didn't know it?"

"I knew of nothing," Weikhardt murmured in astonishment. A long silence followed.

Imhof continued in a changed voice. "The things that followed weren't so different from former experiences. But the central nerve was sick and the source of life poisoned. Sometimes I'm tempted to hasten the disgustingly slow execution by a clean bullet. It's too undignified to have death glide about you as an overfed cat circles around a trapped mouse. Or else one could do the Sardanapalus act—light fireworks and burn the house down, and make one's exit with a grandiose gesture."

"It would be cheap and meretricious," Weikhardt said, "you'd never forgive another for it."

"I'm not capable of it in reality. I cling desperately to the depressing rag of life that's left. Ah, to live at all—what that means!" He bit into his pillow, and moaned: "I don't want to die! I don't want to die! I don't want to die!"

Weikhardt arose to approach the bed. But Imhof beckoned him passionately away. "Thus do I expiate," he moaned. "Thus is the great devourer being devoured. Thus Time hurls me from its bosom. Look upon me writhing here and crying for pardon, and go out and tell the others about it. Give them

my love! And give my love to all dear boys and girls! Good-bye, my friend, good-bye! "

Weikhardt took his leave without a word.

X

Karen's body had been given back to the earth. Many of the people from the house had accompanied it to the grave. Christian thought he had also observed Johanna and Voss.

On the way home Dr. Voltolini walked beside him. For a while they did not speak. Then Christian with the perception of something unpleasant at his back, suddenly turned around. Ten paces behind he saw Niels Heinrich Engelschall. As Christian stopped, the other stopped too, and pretended to look at a shop window.

In the cemetery Christian had escaped from the friends who had accompanied him. Now, too, he would have preferred loneliness; but he did not want to wound the physician.

Continuing a conversation which they had started before the funeral, Dr. Voltolini said: " Stübbe ought to be separated from his family and placed in an institution. At any time delirium tremens might break out and he might kill the whole crowd. And even as it is, the poor woman can't endure his cruelty much longer. She's at the end of her strength."

" I've interfered several times during the past few days," Christian answered softly. " Other neighbours helped too. A man like that is worse than a wolf. The children stand around and tremble."

" And it's so difficult," said Dr. Voltolini, " to get the authorities to take any preventive measures. The law is unreasonably severe. Once a misfortune has taken place, it enters more mercilessly than is necessary; but it can never be moved to prevent anything."

Again Christian turned around. Niels Heinrich was still

following. Again he stopped, looked about him indifferently, and spat on the sidewalk.

"It is never a question of what one knows or desires, but always of what one does," Christian said, walking on again.

"And even what one has done, though it be inspired by the purest motives and the strictest sense of duty, is spattered with mud, and one must suffer for it as for a crime," Dr. Voltolini said bitterly.

"Has that been your experience?" Christian asked, with apparently conventional sympathy, but with his aware and listening glance.

"I don't like to talk about it," Dr. Voltolini said, with a saddened mien. "I haven't done so to any one here so far. You're the first and only one who have made me want to talk. I felt that way so soon as I had met you. It isn't as though you could advise or help me; it's far too late for either. My misfortune has done its worst and has receded into the past. But constant silence gnaws at me, and I can escape a period of paralysis if I can tell you the story of what happened to me."

Christian shook his head very slightly in his astonishment. Many people had already said similar words to him, and he did not understand their motive.

Dr. Voltolini continued: "Until two years ago I practised at Riedberg, near Freiwaldau, in Austrian Silesia. The town is several miles from the frontier of Prussia. Quite near it medicinal springs were discovered. It became a health resort of increasing popularity, and I and my family gradually attained a modest prosperity. But in the beginning of the summer of 1905 it happened that the wife of a cottager was attacked by typhoid fever, and I, according to my sworn duty, reported the case to the health authorities. Several citizens wanted to prevent my action. Even the commission on sanitation, whose chairman was mayor of the town, raised objections, and represented to me how the guests would be scared away

for a long time and the town get a bad name. I told them I was acting in the interests of every one and could not be deterred by merely material considerations. First they besought and finally threatened me, but I remained firm.

"The first consequence was that a regiment, which had been ordered to Riedberg, and whose being stationed there would have been profitable to the town, was sent elsewhere. The panic that had been feared among the guests in the hotels did break out, and most of them fled. And now a wretched stream of abuse was poured out over me, and every one raged against me in the filthiest terms. The men did not respond to my greeting on the street. The butcher and baker and dairyman refused to sell their goods to my wife. Daily I received anonymous letters; you can imagine their character. My windows were smashed; no one came to my consultation hours, no patient dared to summon me. The fees that people owed me were not paid, and suspicions and slanders arose, ranging from silly talk to the vilest insinuations.

"Finally I was discharged from my office of district physician. I appealed to the National Medical Association, which in its turn appealed to the highest authorities. The town council and the sanitary commission were both dissolved by the governor of the province, the mayor was removed from office, my own dismissal revoked, and an escort of gendarmes despatched to the town to protect me and mine from violence. The trouble was that my situation was as bad as ever. The government could protect me from bodily hurt, but it could neither give me back my practice nor force my old patients to pay what they owed me. I was ruined. In the course of five months I brought twenty-one suits of slander and won every case. But I was more discouraged each time. It became clear that I could not stay at Riedberg. But where was I to go—a country doctor without private means, with a wife and children and a feeble, aged mother to support? How was I to silence the slanderers, wash off the stain, and

heal the inner hurt? I had no friend there who could lend me support; from the consolations of my wife there came to me only the voice of her own despair.

"I broke down completely. For eleven months I lay in a hospital. With unexampled energy my wife was busy during this period founding a new home for us and finding a new field of activity for me. I received permission to practise in Germany, and began life anew. Although I had lost faith both in my own powers and in mankind, my soul gradually grew calm again. Our circumstances are the most modest; but in this great city it is possible to be alone and to prevent the interference of strangers. For a long time I could practise my profession only if I forgot that my patients were human. I had to regard them as mechanisms that were to be repaired. Their pain and sorrow I passed over, and I hated to notice either. Do you understand that? Do you understand my coldness and contempt?"

"After all your experiences I can well understand it," Christian answered. "But I believe your standpoint is no longer the same. Am I right? It seems to me that a change has taken place in you."

"Yes, a change has taken place," Dr. Voltolini admitted. "And it began——" He stopped and cast an unobtrusive glance at his companion. After a pause he said timidly: "Why did you smile that day when the Schirmacher girl showed you her ring? Do you remember? You may, of course, reply: it was natural to smile, for the stone which delighted her so was quite worthless, and yet to disillusion her would have been cruel. And yet your smile didn't express that. It expressed something else."

Christian said: "I really don't remember precisely. I do remember the ring and the girl's pleasure in it, but I can't tell you to-day just why I smiled. It would have been better, by the way, if the girl had been less happy. A few days later she lost the ring, and the poor thing cried for hours. It

would have been better if I had said to her: 'Neither the ring nor the stone is worth anything.' I should have told her to throw it away. On such occasions it is almost always better to say to people, 'Throw it away.' Perhaps I smiled because that is what I wanted to say and didn't have the courage."

"That's how it looked," Dr. Voltolini said quickly and with a touch of excitement. "That's the impression I had."

"Why speak of it?" Christian said.

They had reached the house on Stolpische Street. Niels Heinrich, who had followed them, disappeared among the vehicles on the street.

Dr. Voltolini looked at the pavement, and said with embarrassment and hesitation: "You could do a great deal for me in the sense you suggested, if I might call on you every now and then. It sounds strange and like a confession of weakness, coming from a man of my years to one of yours. I can't justify my request, but I know I should be helped. I would get on and be more reconciled to my fate and work harder at the re-establishment of my life." His eyes were turned tensely to Christian's face.

Christian lowered his head, and after some reflection answered: "Your request is very flattering. I should be glad to serve you; I hope I may. But in order not to put you off with empty phrases, I should tell you that I shall be deeply preoccupied in the immediate future—not only inwardly, I am always that, but outwardly too. I am confronted with a difficult task—a terribly difficult task."

Struck by Christian's terrible seriousness Dr. Voltolini said: "I don't mean to be inquisitive. But may I ask what that task is?"

"To find the man who murdered Ruth Hofmann."

"How?" The physician was utterly astonished. "But I thought that the . . . murderer had been arrested."

Christian shook his head. "It is not the right man," he said, softly but with assurance. "I saw him. I saw him

when he appeared before the investigating judge. I knew him before the crime too. He is not the murderer."

"That sounds strange," said Dr. Voltolini. "Is that merely your personal opinion, or do the authorities also——?"

"It's not an opinion," Christian said meditatively. "Perhaps it's more, perhaps it's less—quite as one chooses. I don't know what the authorities suspect. Undoubtedly they consider Joachim Heinzen the murderer. He has confessed, but I consider his confession false."

"Did you express that opinion before the judge?"

"No. How could I have done that? I haven't even a legitimate suspicion. Only I know that the man who is now held is not the murderer."

"But how do you expect to find the real criminal, if you haven't even a suspicion?"

"I don't know, but I must do it."

"You . . . you must? What does that mean?"

Christian did not answer. He raised his eyes and held out a friendly hand to Dr. Voltolini. "And so, if you should come and not find me, don't be angry at me. We shall meet again."

The doctor clasped his hand firmly and silently.

Christian went into the house and up to Karen's rooms. Fifteen minutes later Niels Heinrich mounted the same stairs.

XI

A fleck of sunlight trembled on the opposite wall of the courtyard. Its reflection lighted up the mirror over the leather sofa. A feeble fire was burning in the oven. Before going to the funeral Johanna Schöntag had thrown in a few small shovelfuls of coal. The fire crackled a little, but the room was growing cold.

Michael Hofmann sat in front of the chessboard. The student Lamprecht had set him a problem, and Michael stared at the board and the chessmen. Occasionally his thoughts

converged in a will to find a solution, then they went wandering again. He had now succeeded in turning his mind toward outward things sufficiently to remember the chessmen and their positions. Even in the darkness of the night, during which he slept but rarely, he saw the figures of the two kings.

The fleck of sunshine sank lower on the wall, and the snow on the pavement glittered. Michael looked out through the window, and the gleaming of the snow caused his eyes to move. The whiteness—why did it torment him? He wanted to wipe it out or blow it away or cover it. Whiteness was a lie.

He got up and walked through the room. The glitter of the sunlight came insolently from the whiteness, and the room was filled with its lying shimmer. He hated it.

He stopped and listened and his eyelids twitched. Something floated before his mind, knocked at its door—not so much a forgotten thing as one suppressed and throttled. From his trousers pocket he drew forth a round, tightly rolled, blackish-brown object. He looked at it and began to shudder. For a moment his eyes had the same brooding look as when he regarded the chessmen. Then his fingers grew restless, and, growing paler and paler, he sought to unroll the object in his hand. It was a cloth, a handkerchief. Once it had been white; now it was drenched in blood.

It had been white, but now it was black with blood; and the blood had congealed so that the cloth had the toughness of leather and was hard to unfold. At last the surface appeared, and in one corner of it the embroided initials, R. H.

"Whiteness is evil and redness is evil," Michael whispered to himself, with the look of a beaten dog. He was struggling with a temptation, hunting for a way out, and all his being spoke of despair. He looked about him, hurried to the oven, opened the little iron door, and threw in the blood-drenched handkerchief. When the swift flame flared up he sighed with relief, and stood still and quivering.

XII

No one was in the rooms. The bed in which Karen had died had been taken away.

Christian walked up and down for a while. Then he sat down beside the table and rested his head on his hand. He thought: "Ruth has summoned Karen, as she will summon many more. What is the world without Ruth? For Ruth was the kernel and the soul of all things. And what is it that happened to Ruth, what really happened? Something unspeakably horrible, immeasurably depraved, but also impenetrably mysterious. To fathom it, one must subordinate every other feeling and occupation, all delight, all pain, all plans, and even eating and sleeping and seeing."

He reflected over the confusion that Karen's death had created within him. There was so much empty space about him since she was gone. The empty space cried out after her and was not to be silenced. No mournfulness arose that was not reluctant. Her existence had been as violent and garish as a burning mountain. The earth had swallowed the mountain, and in its place stretched a great waste.

Steps resounded, the door opened, and Niels Heinrich came in.

He nodded contemptuously toward the table at which Christian sat. He had pushed his bowler hat far back and kept it on his head. He looked about like some one examining quarters that had been advertised to be let. He walked into the second room, came back, stood impudently in front of Christian, and made a grimace.

"What do you want?" Christian asked.

He had come for Karen's things, Niels Heinrich announced. The widow had sent him. He always called his mother that. His falsetto voice penetrated to every corner of the room. Everything of Karen's would have to be handed over to him, he said, and counted and taken away.

Very calmly Christian said: "I shall not hinder you. Do as you please."

Niels Heinrich whistled softly through his teeth. He turned around and saw Karen's wooden box standing in a corner. He pulled it into the middle of the room. It was locked. First he struck it with his fist, then with his heel. Christian said it was not necessary to use force; Isolde Schirmacher had the key. Rudely Niels Heinrich swung around, and asked whether the pearls were in it. As Christian was silent in his surprise, the other added with growing irritation that the widow had told him a long story about a rope of pearls the size of pigeon's eggs. He wanted to know who'd inherit those? Undoubtedly they'd belonged to Karen, had been given to her, in fact. Who'd inherit them, he'd like to know! Surely the family who were the rightful heirs. He hoped there'd be no damned nonsense on that point.

"You are mistaken," Christian said coldly. "The pearls did not belong to Karen. They belong to my mother, and I am bound by a promise to return them. At the first opportunity I shall send them to Frankfort."

Niels Heinrich stood quite still for a while, and a green rage seethed in his eyes. "Is that so?" he said finally. The gentleman wanted to liquidate the firm now, did he? First take a poor, stupid wench and trick her out and make a fool of her year in and year out, and then, when she was gone, not even put up something decent for her mourning family. Well, the gentleman needn't think he'd get off so cheaply as long as he, Niels Heinrich, was on deck. And if the gentleman didn't come across with a good pile of shekels, he'd live to see something that'd surprise him; he'd find out, so sure's his name was Niels Heinrich Engelschall. He laughed a short harsh laugh and spread out his legs.

"I know who you are, and I'm not afraid of you," said Christian, with an almost cheerful expression.

Niels Heinrich was taken aback. His glance, which had

grown unsteady, fell upon Christian's delicate, narrow, cultivated hands. Suddenly he looked at his own hands, holding them out and spreading the fingers apart. This gesture interested Christian immensely, though he could not account for the source of his interest. The whole man fascinated him suddenly from a point of view which he had never before assumed; and it was solely due to this curious gesture. Niels Heinrich observed this and was startled anew.

Was that all, he asked, that the gentleman had to say? His mood was menacing now. The gentleman could speak fine High German, he went on, that was sure. But if necessary, he, Niels Heinrich, could do as much. Why not? But if a man was a man of family, and especially of a family where they breed millions the way common folks breed rabbits—well, it was shabby to try to sneak off like a cheat in an inn. He wasn't going to insist on the pearls, although he didn't like to decide how much of a pretence and a hypocrisy this story of lending them was. No gentleman would do such things. But some compensation—he did demand that, he'd insist on it, he owed that to his own honour; and his late sister, if the truth were known, would have expected that much.

Again he regarded his hands.

Christian looked at him attentively, and replied: "You are mistaken in this too. I have no money at my disposal. My liberty of action, so far as money is concerned, is more restricted than your own, more so than that of any one who earns his bread by his own work." He interrupted himself as he observed Niels Heinrich's incredulously jeering smile. The spiritual vulgarity in that smile was overwhelming.

He could take no stock in those stories, Niels Heinrich answered; no, not if he was to be hanged, drawn, and quartered. If the gentleman would tell him what was behind it all, maybe he'd believe it. To do a thing like that a man must have bran in his head. If the gentleman would tell him the real facts,

maybe he'd be able to see light. He'd gladly believe that there was something behind it all. Nobody could tell, of course, what sort of things the gentleman had on his conscience; so his Papa and Mama wouldn't budge with the brass, and he told elegant stories. But one might make things pretty lively for the gentleman. There were a good many people, not only in Stolpische Street but elsewhere, who didn't think the gentleman's love affair with the murdered Jewess all straight and aboveboard. He, Niels Heinrich, knew a thing or two; other people knew other things, the gentleman himself knew a damned lot more than he showed, and he'd have to own up if things got serious. All one'd have to do was to give a hint to the right people, and the gentleman would find himself more clearly described in the newspapers than he had so far. His name'd be coupled with the name of that bloodhound Joachim Heinzen. Then the fat would be in the fire, or, to use the gentleman's manner of speech, he'd be irretrievably compromised.

In Christian's expression there did not appear the faintest trace of indignation or disgust. He sat there with lowered eyes, as though reflecting how he could answer most pertinently and objectively. Then he said: "Your hidden threats frighten me no more than your open ones. I do not care in the least where my name is mentioned or under what circumstances, whether it be spoken or written or printed. No one's opinion or attitude has any influence on me, not even theirs who were once closest to me. So that is the third error which you have made. There is no basis in reality to anything you have said, least of all in your references to my friendship with Ruth Hofmann. No one knows anything about it, and I have spoken to no one; nor did Ruth do so, I am sure. By what right do you pass a judgment on it, and so shameful a one too? You have no suspicion how infinitely far from the truth it is. And yet it surprises me that you expect it to be effective, that you expect so false and empty an

accusation to wound or frighten me. But won't you sit down? You're standing there in such a hostile attitude. There's no occasion for enmity between us; I meant to tell you that long ago. If there's anything concerning your late sister or myself that you want to know, I shall be glad to inform you. In return, I'd like to ask you to answer me a few questions too. Do sit down." He pointed courteously to a chair.

These words, with their calm and their courtesy, amazed Niels Heinrich to the utmost. He had been prepared for tempestuous anger, a proud and irate repulse, for the customary counter-threat that veiled attempts at blackmail are wont to receive, for consternation, possibly for fear. But he was not prepared for this courtesy. It was so fundamentally different from anything that he had met with among men, that his eyes stared in stupid astonishment for a while, as though they saw an irresponsible moron whose behaviour was half absurd and half suspicious. He grasped the chair and sat down on it—half-crouching, ready for an attack or any mischief.

" The gentleman talks like a lawyer," he jeered. " You could make a success at the bar. What do you want to ask me anyhow? Fire away! Don't you have no fear. And seeing as how you talk so educated, I can polish my rough snout too. I ain't without education myself. I don't have to take nothing from no one. I even had a spell at a gymnasium once. The widow had ambitions in her day."

Suddenly his mockery sounded pained and forced. He bit on the iron of his chain.

" You mentioned Joachim Heinzen a moment ago," Christian said. " You called him a bloodhound. Is that your real opinion of him? You and he were very constant companions, and you must have a fairly accurate knowledge of his character. Do you really think he was capable of having committed the murder? Please consider your answer carefully for a moment; a great deal depends on it. Why do you look at me like that?

What is it?" Involuntarily Christian arose, for the look that Niels Heinrich fixed on him was literally frightful.

Niels Heinrich arose at the same moment and almost shrieked. Why ask him such fool questions? What in hell did he mean by 'em? A cardboard box lay on the table; he picked it up and hurled it down on the floor. Becoming aware of the imprudence of his outburst and regretting it, he laughed his goat-like laugh. Then stealthily, with colourless, furtive eyes he went on. Why shouldn't Heinzen be capable of the crime? He said he'd done it and he ought to know. How did the gentleman come to stick his nose into such affairs? Maybe he was a police spy or something? He tried to steady his lightless, furtive eyes in vain. But the slack muscles of his face began to grow taut again as he continued: "I know the feller. Sure, I know him. But you never know what any one is capable of till he does it. I didn't have no notion that he carried about a plan like that. The devil must've gotten into him; he must've swallowed poison. But I told him often enough: 'You ain't going to come to no good end.'" He stuck his fists in his trousers pockets, took a few steps, and leaned boastfully against the oven.

Christian approached him. "It is my impression that Heinzen lies," he said calmly. "He lied to the judge, he lied to himself. He doesn't realize the nature of what he says or does or accuses himself of. Don't you share the opinion that his mind is wholly confused? Assuredly he is but the tool of some one else. Some frightful pressure must have been exerted on him, and under its weight he made statements so incriminating that he became hopelessly enmeshed. Unless a miracle happens or the real criminal is discovered, he is lost."

Niels Heinrich's neck seemed thin as a stalk. His Adam's apple slid strangely up and down. His skin was white; only his ears were red as raw beef. "Would you be so kind as to tell me, my dear fellow, in what way this whole matter

concerns you? " he asked, in his brittle falsetto and with an unexpected abandonment of his gutter jargon, of which he retained only the sharp, staccato rhythm. " What conclusions are you trying to draw? What are you aiming at? And how the devil does it all concern me? Perhaps you'll have the kindness to explain."

" It concerns you," Christian answered, breathing deeply, " because you associated constantly with Joachim Heinzen, and so you ought to be in a position to give me a hint. You must have some definite thoughts of your own on the matter; in one way or another it must touch you. It is my unalterable conviction that Heinzen is not and cannot be the murderer, but I am equally convinced that he has acted under the influence of the real culprit, so the latter must be among those with whom Heinzen associated. Now I cannot imagine that this individual failed to concentrate upon himself the attention of all his acquaintances, for he must be a man who is essentially different from the others. It only confirms my opinion of him that he has so far escaped the arm of justice. But he must be known; a man who was capable of that deed could not be overlooked. And that is why I turn to you. If you had not come to me, I would have gone to you."

Niels Heinrich grinned. " Awf'ly good of you," he said, with contorted lips. " I'd've been tickled to death." Oppression and rending excitement betrayed themselves in his convulsively raised brows. He tried to control himself, and yet stammered as he continued: " Is that so? So that's your conviction—unalterable conviction, eh? And where do you get that conviction, I'd like to ask, eh? Why shouldn't he have killed her, seeing as how he confessed in court? Why not, eh? Nobody made him say it. This is all dam' nonsense; you just simply dreamed this business or you was drunk. What made you think of it? "

" I shall tell you that," said Christian, with an expression that had grown more meditative from minute to minute. " A

human being like this Joachim Heinzen was not capable of killing Ruth. Think what it means to kill a human being. And when that human being is Ruth! Oh, no, it's quite out of the question. The poor fellow is actually weak-minded. Many believe him guilty for that very reason; but no weak-minded man could have killed Ruth. Even if we suppose that he obeyed his animal instincts utterly, and that in his bestial rage he lost all self-control and all human semblance, yet he could never have gone to the ultimate length, to murder. Not this lad; it is out of the question. I have looked at his hands—at his hands and at his eyes. It is out of the question."

He paused. Niels Heinrich leaned against the oven, holding his hands carefully between his back and the tiles.

Christian continued, in a voice that was gentle and yet extraordinarily clear and penetrating: "It is out of the question, because he does not possess the necessary qualifications for the deed. I have tried to sink myself as profoundly as possible into his psychical life. I have succeeded in excluding from my consciousness all other thoughts and images, in order to arrive at a vision of his character as well as of the rôle which he played in connection with the crime. And when I have imagined him in his most bestial unrestraint, in all the rage of his lechery, I am still convinced that at the last moment he would have succumbed to Ruth. If Ruth had looked at him as he raised his arm, being what he is and as I know him, he would have weakened. He would have fallen whimpering on his knees, and rather killed himself than done her any hurt. And if she had inspired him with but one spark of thought or feeling, she would have won him over entirely. You may reply that these are mere hypotheses and suppositions; but that is not the case when one considers what Ruth was. Did you know her? Had you ever met her?"

This innocent and harmless question brought a ghastly pallor into the face of Niels Heinrich. He murmured something, and shrugged his shoulders.

" You may also make this objection: the same pressure which drove him to his confession may also have driven him to the deed itself. What will not a human being do in the darkness of mania, especially one so degraded and brutal and spiritually infirm. I consider his confessions quite valueless; it is clear that he has been influenced and commanded to make them. He contradicts himself constantly, and denies to-day what he affirmed yesterday. He sticks only to the one point of his guilt. But in this stubborn self-accusation there is more than mere persistence; there is despair and utter horror. And these are not manifested as they would be by a guilty soul in the torments of conscience, but as they would be manifested by a child who has spent a long night in a dark room, where monstrous and ghastly horrors shook the very foundations of its soul. His conscience should have been eased by confession, but the contrary is true. How is that to be explained?

" Furthermore, he is supposed to have lured Ruth to a hidden place. Certainly it must have been obscure and hidden, for the deed was not done in woods or lonely fields. But in spite of the most rigid search, no such spot has been discovered, and at no hearing has it been possible to persuade Heinzen to point it out. He is being questioned on this point continually, but he is resolutely silent or answers nonsense. Two explanations have been proposed. One is that he desires to save an accomplice who might be tracked from the scene of the crime. The other is that he suffers from one of those disturbances or even complete interruptions of the memory, such as are familiar to psychiatrists in their study of abnormal types. I accept neither the one explanation nor the other. It is my opinion that he doesn't know the place. He was not perhaps even present when the murder was committed. It is possible that he was drugged or drunk, and awakened from his stupor only to see the body. And it is possible that the sight of the body produced in him a fearful self-deception, or

that he was tricked and driven into believing himself the murderer. . . ."

Niels Heinrich advanced a single step. His jaw shook. He felt as though a rain of burning stones were falling on him. A dark astonishment and horror were revealed in his face. He wanted to be silent, to jeer, to go; he wanted to seem cold and unconscious of any knowledge or understanding. For danger was upon him, the ultimate danger of vengeance, of the sword, the rope, the axe. He saw them all. Yet he was not capable of self-control; something within was stronger than he. "Man alive . . ." The words came clucking from his throat on fire. "Man alive . . ." Then came a wild terror of increasing the danger by his behaviour. He couldn't stand that; it was too much for his nerves. What had that man to do with it? And again he fell silent before Christian's slightly blinking glance, and became tense with staring and waiting. He'd have to watch this man now; the business was getting bad; it was necessary now to guard his life. God, what wouldn't that accursed mouth utter?

Christian walked to the window and returned. He walked around the table and returned. He had become aware of the stirring in Niels Heinrich; and he had the impression of having witnessed the bursting of some taut vessel and felt the flick of flying slime. But this impression was not tangible at once. Only he had the curious feeling of having received a confirmation of thoughts and visions of which he was himself still faintly doubtful; and these he wanted to develop and fortify. He said: "To lure Ruth to the spot where she was killed needed a certain cunning. Careful preparations were necessary, and guarded plans; and these were skilfully made, as their success illustrates. But all witnesses who know Heinzen agree that he is incapable of such activities. He is described as so stupid that he cannot remember names or numbers; and then it is assumed that he could have committed the murder with the brutal, merciless violence of a degraded debauchee;

The experts in criminology assert that precisely this mixture of the cunning and the brutal is characteristic of such types and such crimes. That may be true; but it proves nothing in this case, which was not so simple. Ruth went another path from that to Joachim Heinzen."

"Another, eh? What one, eh? Well, well," Niels Heinrich croaked. "Ain't it enough to give you a belly-ache? Ain't it enough to——" He took his hat, which he had hung up at the beginning of the conversation, put it on at a dashing angle, and prepared to go. But Christian knew that Niels Heinrich would not go, and followed him with a passionately inquiring glance. He was terribly moved.

Niels Heinrich got as far as the door. There he turned around, and with a peering, repressed look drew from his pocket, with apparent indifference, a little revolver. He held it in one hand. With the other hand he played, still indifferently and as though to amuse himself, with the trigger and the barrel.

Christian paid no attention to this perfidious gesture. He scarcely saw it. He stood in the middle of the room, and, in the irresistible excitement which had mastered him, pressed his right hand over his eyes. He said: "Perhaps I only dreamed that she determined of her own free will to die. Oh, it was murder, none the less. But she consented to it. And those last hours of hers! They must have been unheard of—verging on the ultimate which no feeling can reach. Step by step! And then at last she begged for the end. Perhaps I have only dreamed it, but it seems to me as though I had seen . . ."

He stopped, for a sharp, whip-like report resounded. A shot had been fired. One of the chairs beside the table trembled; the bullet was buried in its leg. But it had also grazed the back of Niels Heinrich's hand, and from the wound, which was like a cut, the blood trickled. He cursed and shook himself.

"You've hurt yourself," Christian said, sympathetically, and went up to him. Yet both were listening—like accomplices. The entrance of another seemed equally undesirable to both. Although the detonation had been moderate, it had been heard in the adjoining flats. One heard doors opening and questioning, scolding, frightened voices. After a few minutes the silence fell again. The people in the house were used to sudden alarms, and quickly quieted down.

Niels Heinrich wrapped his rather soiled handkerchief about his wounded hand. But Christian hurried into the next room, and returned with a jug of water and a clean cloth. He washed the wound and bandaged it expertly. He did so with a tenderness and care that made Niels Heinrich regard him with tensely wrinkled forehead and sombre shyness. He had never seen any one, no man at least, act thus. He was passive. He was contemptuous, yet could not hold his contempt. He could not but let Christian finish.

"It might have had dangerous consequences," Christian murmured.

Niels Heinrich did not answer, and so there ensued a long and rather strange silence.

Niels Heinrich became aware of the terrible meaning of this silence, and words came from him raspingly: "Well, what's wanted?"

Christian leaned with both hands upon the back of the chair, and looked at Niels Heinrich. He was pale, and struggled for expression. "It would be important to determine where Michael was hidden in the time during which he was gone," he began. He spoke differently now—more gropingly and searchingly, quiveringly and uncertainly, as though, during his very speaking, he were constantly addressing questions to himself. "It would be extremely important. Michael is Ruth's brother. Perhaps you have heard that for six days he could not be found anywhere. Whenever the commissary of police or the investigating judge try to question him, he has an

attack of hysterics. So they have determined to let him be for a while, merely keeping a strict watch over him; but he will not move from the room, and utters no sound. The medical experts shake their heads and are at a loss. And everything depends on his being persuaded to speak at last. Surely it would throw some light on the mystery. But much would be gained if only we discovered where he was hidden."

Niels Heinrich stared in dark consternation. This man grew more and more terrible. The thought of flight quivered in his eyes. "How d'you expect me to know?" he grunted. "What the bloody hell do I care? How should I know? I told you before—what the——" He lapsed back into his Berlinese jargon, as though it were a refuge.

"I merely thought that rumours might have come your way, that perhaps people who live near the Heinzens noticed or heard something. Do you recall any such thing?"

The question was so earnest, so full of monition and almost of beseeching, that Niels Heinrich, instead of yielding to an impulse of anger, listened, listened to that voice, and had the appearance of one who was bound in fetters. And gradually he really recalled a rumour of that kind which had come to him. There was among his acquaintances a woman of the streets called Molly Gutkind. On account of her plump body and white skin she was known as the Little Maggot. She was quite young, barely seventeen. A few days ago he had been told that the Little Maggot had given shelter to a boy for quite a while, that she had carefully hidden him from everyone, and that, since then, a complete change had come over her. Before that, she had been cheerful and careless; now she was melancholy, and haunted the streets no more.

He had been told this as he was told all the news of the lower world, but he had paid no attention to the anecdote, and it had slipped from his memory. Now it emerged in his mind and fitted the case in question. An instinct told him that it fitted; but that very perception increased his feeling

of defencelessness before this man who seemed now to be gazing into him and tearing from him things silent and hidden and even forgotten. He must follow up the rumour, and very secretively get to the bottom of it and test it. In order to say something and tear himself away at last, he murmured that he'd see what could be done, but the gentleman mustn't count on him, because spying was not his kind of business. He dragged himself shiftily to the door with a wavering, withered expression. He rubbed his moist fingers together and lit a cigarette, shivered in the coolness that met him from the outer hall, and turned up the collar of his yellow overcoat.

Christian courteously accompanied him to the door, and said softly: "I hope to see you soon. I shall expect you."

On the landing of the second storey Niels Heinrich stopped and laughed his goat-like laugh senselessly into the void.

XIII

Prince Wiguniewski wrote to Cornelius Ermelang at Vaucluse in the South of France:

"In your Petrarchan solitude you seem to have lost all touch with the world, since you inquire so insistently after our diva. I thought you were still in Paris and that you had seen Eva Sorel. For she returned from there only a few weeks ago—returned like a general after a victorious campaign of three weeks, full of fame and booty. Didn't you learn from the newspapers at least of the feverish enthusiasm which she has recently created in international society?

"In your inquiry there is an undertone of anxiety. I understand the reason for it, even though you are reserved on that point. Brief as your visit to her during your stay in Petrograd may have been, your eyes, which are so practised in reading the souls of men, must have perceived the change that has come over her. I hesitate to call that change one that should cause us anxiety, for doubtless it conforms

somehow to the law of her being. Yet to behold it means pain to us who witnessed her beginnings and her rise—to those ten or twelve people in Europe, the fairest experience of whose youth was her sweetness and radiance and starry freedom from earth's heaviness. She was timeless; she was at each moment that very moment's gift. I need not describe to you what she was; you knew her. But is it for us to quarrel or mourn because a given development does not correspond to our expectations? However we may strive and cry, that which has become and now is unquestionably holds the wiser and the deeper sense of life. We always want too much, and so end by seeing and understanding too little. We need more humility.

"It is a fact that she employs and stirs public opinion in our country as scarcely any other human being does. Every one knows at all times who is in her favour and who has fallen from grace. The luxury that surrounds her generates the wildest fables, and does, indeed, surpass anything ever known. Her monthly income runs into the hundreds of thousands, and her fortune is estimated at between twenty and thirty millions of rubles. Twice a week she receives a carload of flowers from the Riviera, and twice from the Crimea.

"Concerning the castle which she is building at Yalta on the sea, details are told that remind one of the Arabian Nights. It is to be finished in a month, and magnificent festivities are planned for the house-warming. I am among the guests invited. Every one is talking about this castle. The park is said to cover an area of five square miles. Only by a most extravagant expenditure of money and labour could the whole thing have been completed within a year. I am told that the central building has a tower from which one has a magnificent view of the sea, and that this tower is a copy of the tower of the Signoria at Florence. A gilded spiral staircase with a balustrade of costly enamel leads upward within, and each window affords a carefully selected view of the southern landscape.

To adorn the walls of one of her great rooms she desired the remaining paintings which the British had still left in El Hira, the celebrated ruin in the Arabian desert. To obtain them, extensive commercial and diplomatic negotiations were necessary. Further large sums were spent and difficulties surmounted to fit out an expedition which was in the desert for three months and has but just returned. Its task was as dangerous as it was romantic, and seven of its members lost their lives. When Eva was told of this, she seemed to be frightened and to regret the boldness of her desires. But then she saw the pictures, and was so entranced that her smile seemed almost to express a satisfaction at the sacrifices they had cost.

"There is no exaggeration in this account. Such is her nature now. Those inconceivably beautiful hands treat the world as though it were possessed by slaves and meant and destined for her alone. I myself beheld her one day crouching before the paintings of a strange, far age, and I was shaken by the expression with which she regarded the gestures of those archaic figures. It was an expression of estrangedness and cruelty.

"It is quite by chance that I drifted to the subject of the ancient paintings and how they were procured. But I see now that I could have chosen no shorter path to the kernel of what I should like to tell you. The events of the past few days actually start from that incident. Few men, of course, can raise the veil that hides these events to-day and will probably always hide them. Any one who has not, like myself, gained some insight through a series of lucky accidents, is simply groping in the dark. I must beg you, too, to observe the strictest secrecy. This letter, which is being sent with especial precautions and which as courier of the embassy is taking across the frontier, may serve as a document entrusted to your care. By its help a later age will be able to track the genesis of certain happenings to their most distant roots.

"Scarcely had the paintings of El Hira arrived, than reclamations on the ground of violated property rights were made by France. The arrangements with England were asserted to have omitted all consideration of the legal rights of a Parisian stock-company, and the French government overwhelmed our ministry with notes and protests. The leader of the expedition, a courageous and witty scholar named Andrei Gabrilovitch Yaminsky, was accused of open robbery. The whole matter was unpleasant and the consternation great, and the noise intimidated even the old foxes of diplomacy. They feared that they had committed a bad blunder, and thus promenaded into the trap set for them. Since this affair, amusingly enough, actually threatened to darken the political sky, the important thing, above all, was to keep it from the knowledge of the Grand Duke Cyril, who holds the threads of foreign affairs in his hands like a spider in the midst of its web, and who feels the gentlest vibration. All efforts were directed to this end. Terror of the Grand Duke's rage created the most grotesque situations in the responsible ministerial offices.

"The minister in person went to Eva Sorel. She declared proudly that she would assume full responsibility and guard everyone concerned from unpleasant consequences. But there were grave doubts as to that. Similar cases were recalled, in which later on a malicious punishment had, after all, been the portion of the subordinates. So Eva was earnestly begged to give up the mural paintings. She resisted steadily, asserted her right to them, and grew defiant. When the officials were foolish enough to have Andrei Yaminsky, to whom she had taken a great liking, arrested, she threatened to inform the Grand Duke, who happened to be staying at Tsarskoye Selo. Thus terror rose to its utmost height. And now the original instigators of the whole intrigue held their fit time to have come. Suddenly there was calm and the storm had passed. But what had been the hidden and ultimate occasion of it all?

"The initiated whispered of an unholy bargain; but their knowledge, it seems to me, reaches no farther than mine. I sit near enough to the loom to see the shuttles flying to and fro. But I can assert that it is weaving an evil web. In what age have not the arts of a courtesan served to drag nations into slaughter? Perhaps you think the twentieth century too advanced for cabals in the style of Mazarin? I am not so sure of it. And perhaps you also think that the great catastrophes and revolutions use the wills and the actions of trivial mortals only in appearance, and that both accusation and guilt lose their validity when we become aware of the impersonal march of fate? But we do not grasp that march. We are human and we must judge, even as we must suffer, just because we must suffer.

"The unholy bargain involved in this instance concerns the building of fortresses on our Polish and Volhynian frontiers. For unknown reasons the Grand Duke opposed this plan until now. But during the past few days there has been talk of a new government loan. Well, there is one human being and only one capable of having inclined his rigid will toward this project. Why say more? One shudders at the thought of a connection between mural paintings five thousand years old and the springs of modern diplomatic trickery; between the bought complaisance of that incomparable body, that true adornment of the world, and the erection of fortress walls and casemates. The comedy rends one's heart.

"But that is not all my story. Connected with these events is the death of Andrei Gabrilovitch Yaminsky. I have indicated the fact that Eva was markedly attracted toward him. The courage and energy he had shown in that expedition to the desert, his mind, and not least of all his physical advantages dazzled her. She distinguished him in every way. Since she admits the existence of no barriers and gives her impulses complete expression in action, she did not hesitate in this instance, and Yaminsky was granted a happiness of which he had not

dared to dream, and which seems to have robbed him of all moral equilibrium. It filled him to overflowing; it crazed him. Among his friends one evening, over the wine, of course, he began to chatter and boasted of his conquest. He realized his frightful error too late. What would have been contemptible weakness in any instance was sheer crime here. Too late he besought his witnesses to forget his words, to be silent, to consider him a liar and a boaster. Nor did it help him to seek them out singly and persuade them to secrecy. The rumour was started. A discreet and suspected affair would not have caused more than silent or whispered curiosity. The thing openly acknowledged became a topic of general talk. Punishment did not delay long, and Fyodor Szilaghin was the executioner.

"It is not easy to define the rôle which Szilaghin plays in Eva's present life. Now he seems to be her warder, now her seducer. No one knows whether he desires to please and win her, or whether he is but the servant and Argus of his sombre lord and friend. I believe that Eva herself is in the dark on this point. His enigmatic character, his masterly subtlety and impenetrable faithlessness seemed to me like the visible symbols of the darkening and disquietude of Eva's soul. There is no doubt that he acted with her knowledge and consent when he undertook to punish Yaminsky. But I dare not decide whether they ever actually spoke of the matter, whether it was done at his or her demand, whether her disappointment made her yield to him or her anger made her revengeful for herself, whether he acted in defence of her honour or that of his master. At all events, the punishment was accomplished.

"The deed itself is hidden in mystery and twilight, and is described with rather repulsive details. Last Wednesday evening Yaminsky was dining with friends in a side room at Cubat's on the great Morskaia. Shortly before midnight the door was torn open, and four young men, muffled in furs to their eyes, made their way in. Three of them surrounded

Yaminsky, and one turned out the lights. Immediately a shot resounded, and before Yaminsky's friends had recovered from their amazement, the strangers were gone. Yaminsky lay on the floor, soaking in his blood. Szilaghin was definitely recognized as one of the four.

"The boldest stroke came later. In the tumult that arose among the guests of the restaurant, the body of the murdered man had been forgotten. People called for the police and ran and shoved and asked questions. In the meantime a cab stopped at the door. Two men made their way through the crowd to where the dead man lay, and carried him past the staring bystanders into the cab. No one prevented them. The cab raced down the Nevski to the Palace Bridge and stopped. The two dragged the body to the shore, and flung it down among the ice floes of the wintry Neva.

"That same evening I was at Eva's, together with Caille, Lord Elmster, and some Russian artists. She was entrancing, and of a sparkling gaiety that made one feel loth to lose a breath of it. I no longer remember how the conversation happened to turn to sidereal phenomena and solar systems. For a while in the usual light way, the question was considered whether other planets might not be inhabited by men or man-like beings. And Eva said: 'I have read, and wise men have told me, that Saturn has ten moons and also a ring of glowing fire that surrounds the great star with purple and violet flame. The planet itself, I am told, is still composed of red-hot lava. But on the ten moons there might be life and creatures like ourselves. Imagine the night in those regions—the dark glow of the great mother star, the purple rainbow forever spanning the whole firmament, and the ten moons circling beside and above one another, so near perhaps that those beings can speak and communicate from world to world. What possibilities! What visions of happiness and beauty!' Such, or nearly such were her words. One of us replied that it was quite as easy to conceive of moon at war with moon, even as here land wars

with land, despite the glory of the heavens, and that experience made us fear that nowhere in the universe would the wonders of a sky save restless creatures like ourselves from robbery and violence. But she said: 'Do not destroy my faith; leave me my Saturnian Paradise.'

"And she knew, she could not but have known, that in that very hour Yaminsky, whom she had loved, was dying an ugly and a murderous death.

"It is difficult to have humility."

XIV

Christian shared his meals with Michael, and cared for him in brotherly fashion. At night he spread a couch for him with his own hands. He knew how to accustom the boy to his presence; his gift of unobtrusiveness stood him in good stead. In his presence Michael lost the convulsive rigour which not even Johanna's affectionate considerateness had been able to break. At times he would follow Christian with his eyes. "Why do you look at me?" Christian asked. The boy was silent.

"I should like to know what you are thinking," Christian said.

The boy was silent. Again and again he followed Christian with his eyes, and seemed torn between two feelings.

On a certain evening he spoke for the first time. "What will happen to me?" he whispered, in a scarcely audible voice.

"You should have a little confidence in me," Christian said, winningly.

Michael stared in front of him. "I am afraid," he said at last.

"What are you afraid of?"

"Of everything. Of everything in the world. Of people and animals and darkness and light and of myself."

"Have you felt that way long?"

"You think it is only since . . . No. It has always been so. The fear is in my body like my lungs or my brain. When I was a child I lay abed at night trembling with fear. I was afraid if I heard a noise. I was afraid of the house and the wall and the window. I was afraid of a dream which I had not yet dreamed. I thought: 'Now I shall hear a scream,' or: 'Now there will be a fire.' If father was out in the country I thought: 'He will never come back; there are many who never come back; why should he?' If he was at home I thought: 'He has had a dreadful experience, but no one must know it.' But it was worse when Ruth was away. I never hated any one as I hated Ruth in those days, and it was only because she was away so much. It was my fear."

"And you went about with that fear in your heart and spoke of it to no one?"

"To whom could I have spoken? It all seemed so stupid. I would have been laughed at."

"But as you grew older the fear must have left?"

"On the contrary." Michael shook his head and looked undecided. He seemed to waver. Should he say more? "On the contrary," he repeated. "Such fear grows up with one. Thoughts have no power over it. If once you have it, all that you dread comes true. One should know less; to know less is to suffer less fear."

"I don't understand that," said Christian, although the boy's words moved him. "The fear of childhood—that I understand. But it passes with childhood."

Again Michael shook his head.

"Explain it to me," Christian continued. "You probably see danger everywhere, and fear illnesses and misfortunes and meetings with people."

"No," Michael answered swiftly, and wrinkled his forehead. "It's not so simple. That happens too, but it can't harm one

much. It isn't reality. Reality is like a deep well; a deep, black, bottomless hole. Reality is . . . Wait a moment: Suppose I take up the chessboard. Suddenly it's not a chessboard at all. It's something strange. I know what it is, but I can't remember. Its name gives me no clue to what it is. But the name causes me to be satisfied for a while. Do you understand? "

"Not at all. It's quite incomprehensible."

"Well, yes," Michael said, morosely. "I suppose it is foolishness."

"Couldn't you take some other example? "

"Another? Wait a moment. It's so hard for me to find the right expressions. Wait . . . A couple of weeks ago father had gone to Fürstenwalde. He went one evening, and he was to be back the next morning. I was alone at home. Ruth was with friends, in Schmargendorf, I think. She had told me she would be home late, and as it grew later I grew more and more restless. Not because I feared that something might have happened to Ruth; I didn't even think of that. It was the empty room and the evening and the flight of time. Time runs on so, with such terrible swiftness and with such terrible relentlessness. It runs like water in which one must drown. If Ruth had come, there would have been a barrier to that awful flowing; time would have had to start anew. But Ruth did not come. There was a clock on the wall of that room. You must have seen it often—a round clock with a blue dial and a pendulum of brass. It ticked and ticked, and its ticking was like hammer blows. At last I went and held the pendulum, and the ticking stopped. Then the fear stopped too, and I could go to sleep. Time was no more, and my fear was no more."

"It is very strange," Christian murmured.

"Years ago, when we were taught to be religious, it was better. One could pray. Of course, the prayers too were pure fear, but they eased one."

"I am surprised," said Christian, "that you never confided in your sister."

Michael gave a start. Then he answered very shyly, and so softly that Christian had to move his chair nearer to hear at all. "My sister . . . no, that was impossible. Ruth had so much to bear as it was; but it would have been impossible anyhow. Among Jews, brothers and sisters are not as close as among Christians; I mean Jews who don't live among Christians. We're from the country, you know, and so we were farther removed from other people than here. A brother can't confide in his sister. From the very beginning the sister is a woman; you feel that, even when she's a little girl. And the whole misery comes from just that . . ."

"How is that? What particular misery?" Christian asked, in a whisper.

"It is frightfully hard to tell," Michael continued, dreamily. "I don't believe I can express it; it might sound so ugly. But it goes on and on, and one detail arises from another. Brother and sister—it sound so innocent. But each of the two has a body and a soul. The soul is clean, but the body is unclean. Sister—she is sacred. But it's a woman, too, that one sees. Day and night it steals into your brooding—woman . . . woman. And woman is terror, because woman is the body, and the body is fear. Without the body one could understand the world; without woman one could understand God. And until one understands God, the fear is upon one. Always the nearness of that other body that you are forced to think about. Where we lived last we all had to sleep in one room. Every evening I hid my head under the covering and held my thoughts in check. Don't misunderstand me, please! It wasn't anything ugly; my thoughts weren't ugly thoughts. But there was that terrible, nameless fear . . . Oh, how can I explain it? The fear of . . . No, I can't put it into words. There was Ruth, so tender and delicate. Everything about her was in direct contradiction

to the idea of woman; and yet I trembled with aversion because she was one. Man as he is made and as he shows himself—ah, those are two different things. I must tell you about a dream I had—not once, but twenty times, always alike. I dreamed that a fire had broken out, and that Ruth and I had to flee quite naked down the stairs and out of the house. Ruth had to drag me along by force, or I would have rushed back right into the fire, so terrible was my shame. And I thought: 'Ruth, that isn't you, that mustn't be you.' I didn't, in that dream, ever see her, but I knew and felt that she was naked. And she—she acted quite naturally and even smiled. 'Dear God,' I thought, 'how can she smile?' And then by day I didn't dare look at her, and every kind glance of hers reminded me of my sin. But why do I tell you all that—why? It makes me feel so defiled, so unspeakably defiled."

"No, Michael, go on," Christian said, gently and calmly. "Don't be afraid. Tell me everything. I shall understand, or, at all events, I shall do my best to understand."

Michael looked searchingly up at Christian. His precocious features were furrowed with spiritual pain. "I sought a woman whom I might approach," he began, after a pause. "It seemed to me that I had soiled Ruth in my mind, and that I must cleanse that soilure. I was guilty before her, and must be liberated from that guilt."

"It was a fatal delusion in which you were caught," Christian said. "You weren't guilty. You had painfully constructed that guilt." He waited, but Michael said nothing. "Guilty," Christian repeated, as though he were weighing the word in his hand. "Guilty . . ." His face expressed absolute doubt.

"Guilty or not," the boy persisted, "it was as I have told you. If I feel a sense of guilt, who can redeem me from it? One can only do that oneself."

"Believe me," said Christian, "it is a delusion."

"But they were all Ruth," Michael continued, and his voice was full of dread. "They were all Ruth—the most depraved and degraded. I had so much reverence for them, and at the same time I felt a great disgust. The unclean thing always grew more powerful in my thoughts. While I sought and sought, my life became one pain. I cursed my blood. Whatever I touched became slimy and unclean."

"You should have confessed to Ruth, just to her, she was the best refuge you had," said Christian.

"I couldn't," Michael assured him. "I couldn't. Rather I should have done, I don't know what . . . I couldn't."

For a while he lost himself in brooding. Then he spoke quickly and hastily. "On the Saturday before the Sunday on which Ruth was at home for the last time, father sent me to the coal-dealer to pay the bill in person. There was no one in the shop, so I went into the room behind the shop, and there lay the coal-dealer with a woman in his arms. They did not notice me, and I fled; I don't remember how I got out, but until evening I ran about senselessly in the streets. The terror had never been so great. Next afternoon—it was that very Sunday—between four and five I was walking on Lichener Street. Suddenly a rainstorm came up, and a girl took me under her umbrella. It was Molly Gutkind. I saw at once the sort of girl she was. She asked me to come home with her. I didn't answer, but she kept on walking beside me. She said if I didn't want to come now, she'd wait for me that evening, that she lived on Prenzlauer Alley, opposite the gas-tank near the freight station, over a public house called 'Adele's Rest.' She took my hand and coaxed me: 'You come, little boy, you look so sad. I like your dark eyes; you're an innocent little creature.' When I reached home I saw what Ruth had written on the slate. Prenzlauer Alley—how strange that was! It might so easily have been some other neighbourhood. It was very strange. I felt desolate, and sat down on the stairs. Then I went up to the room and read father's

letter, and it seemed to me as though I had known everything beforehand. I felt so lonely that I went down again, and walked and walked until I stood in front of that house in Prenzlauer Alley."

"And so, of course, you went up to the girl's room?" Christian asked, with a strangely cheerful expression that hid his suspense.

Michael nodded. He said he had hesitated a long time. In the public-house he had heard the playing of a harmonica. It was an exceedingly dirty house standing back from the street, an old house with splotches of moisture on the wall and a wooden fence, and a pile of bricks and refuse in front of it. At the door a dog had stood. "I didn't dare go past that dog," said Michael, and mechanically folded his hands. "He was so big and stared at me so treacherously. But Molly Gutkind had seen me from the window (the house has only two storeys); she beckoned to me, and the dog trotted out into the street. I went into the house, and there was Molly on the stairs. She laughed and drew me into her room. She served me with food, ham sandwiches and pastry. To-day, she said, she'd be my hostess; next time I'd have to be her host. She said she knew I was a Jew and she was glad; she always liked Jews. If I'd be just a little bit nice to her, I'd never regret it. It was all so peculiar. What was I to her? What could I be to her? I said I'd go now, but she wouldn't let me, and said I must stay with her. And then . . . !"

"My dear boy," Christian said, softly.

The tender words made the boy shudder all the more. He was silent for many minutes. When he spoke again his voice sounded changed. He said dully: "Three times I begged her to blow out the lamp, and at last she did so. But something happened to the girl that I hadn't expected. She said she wouldn't sin against me; she saw that she was a bad girl, and I must forgive her. As she said this she wept, and she added

that she longed for her home with all her heart, and had a horror of her present life. I seemed to be stricken dumb, but I was sorry for her with all my heart. My body trembled and my teeth chattered, and I let her speak and lament. When I saw that she had fallen asleep, I thought about myself as deeply and severely as I could. It was dark and silent; I heard nothing but the breathing of the girl. No guests were left in the public-house below. It was uncannily silent; and with every moment's silence my old fear grew within me. Every moment it seemed to me that that terrible silence must be broken. I watched the very seconds pass. And suddenly I heard a cry. A sudden cry. How shall I describe it? It came from deep, deep below, from under the earth, from behind walls. It was not very loud or shrill, but it was a cry to make the heart stop beating. It was like a ray, do you understand, a hot, thin, piercing ray. I can compare it to nothing else. I thought—Ruth! My single thought was—Ruth! Do you understand that? It was as though some one had plunged an icy blade into my back. O God, it was terrible! "

"And what did you do?" asked Christian, white as the wall.

And Michael stammered that he had lain there and lain there, and listened and listened.

"Is it possible that you didn't jump up and rush out? That you didn't——? Is it possible?"

How could he have believed, Michael said, that it was really Ruth? The thought had shot into his brain only like a little, flickering flame of terror. He stared wide-eyed into nothingness, and suddenly sobbed. "And now listen," he said, and reached for Christian's hand, "listen!"

And this is what he told. His face was veiled, tear-stained, pale as death. He hadn't been able to forget that cry. He didn't know how much time had passed, when finally he arose from the girl's side. He had left the room on tiptoe. The darkness had been solid; outside he had seen and heard

nothing. He had stood on the stairs for perhaps fifteen minutes. Then he had heard steps, steps and gasps as of some one carrying a heavy burden. He hadn't moved. Then he had seen a light, the beam of a bull's-eye lantern; and he had seen a man, not his face, only his back. This man had carried a large bale on his back and a bundle in his hand. The man's feet had been bare, and the feet had been red—with blood. He had gone in front of the house and set down the bale; then he had gone back into the cellar and come back with another man. He had shoved this man in front of him as one shoves a keg. One could tell that from the sound, but nothing could be seen, because the lantern had now been darkened. The second man had uttered sounds as though he had a gag in his mouth. Then they had gone away, after closing the door of the house, and all had been silent again. "I had been at the head of the stairs the whole time," Michael said, and took a deep breath.

Christian said nothing. He seemed turned to stone.

"It was very quiet and I went down," Michael continued his account. "Something drew me on. I groped my way to the cellar stairs step by step. There I stood a long time. Dawn was rising; I could see it from the narrow window above the door. I stood at the head of the cellar stairs. Steps of stone lead downwards. I saw first one, then two, then three, then four. The lighter it grew, the more steps I saw, but the light could not get beyond the sixth step."

It was harder and harder for him to speak. Sweat stood on his forehead. He leaned back and seemed about to fall over. Christian supported him. He got up and bent over the boy. In his attitude and gesture there was something wonderfully winning. Everything depended now on discovering the last, most fearful truth. His whole being concentrated itself in his will, and the boy yielded to this silent power. What he confessed now sounded at first confused and dim as the story of ghostly visions or the dreams of fever. One could

hardly tell from the words what was reality and what the compulsive imaginings of fear. One grisly fact stood out—the finding of the blood-soaked handkerchief. Thrice Christian asked whether he had found it on the stairs or in the cellar. Each time the boy's answer was different. He quivered like a rope in the wind when Christian begged him to be exact and to think carefully. He said he didn't remember. Yes, he did, too; it had been down below. He described a partition, wooden railings, and a small, barred cellar window, through which the yellowish pale light of morning had now come in. But he hadn't really been master of his senses, and couldn't remember whether he had really entered the room. And at that he gave a loud sob.

Christian stood beside him, laying both hands on the boy's shoulders. The boy quivered as though an electric current were passing through him. "I beseech you," said Christian, "Michael, I beseech you!" and he felt his own strength ebbing. Then Michael whispered that he had recognized Ruth's initials on the handkerchief at once. But from that moment his brain seemed to have been hacked to pieces, and he begged Christian to plague him no more. He wouldn't go on; he'd rather drop down dead. But Christian grasped the boy's wrists. And Michael whispered: the house had betrayed the fact to him that something nameless had happened to Ruth, and the air had roared it to him. The walls seemed to have piled themselves on him and he had had a vision of everything, everything, and had whined and moaned and lacerated his neck with his own nails. "Here and here and here," he sobbed and pointed to his neck, which was indeed covered with the scars of recent scratches. Then he had run to the door of the house and rattled the knob, and then back again and had counted the cellar steps, just out of sheer despair. Then he had run up the stairs, and suddenly, at a door, he had seen a man; in the twilight he had seen a fat man with a white apron and a white cap, such

as are worn by bakers, and a kerchief around his neck with stiff, white, protruding ends. The man had stood on the threshold, white and fat and sleepy. He might have been a shadow or an apparition. But he had said in a low, sleepy, surly voice: "Now they've gone and killed her, lad." After that he had vanished, simply vanished; and he, Michael, had rushed breathlessly into Molly Gutkind's room. She had waked up, and he had lain down on the bed and besought her with all the passion of his stricken soul to be silent and to keep him hidden, even if he were to fall ill, to tell no one but to keep him there and be silent. Why he had asked that, why it had seemed so necessary to him that the girl should say nothing—even now he didn't understand that. But he felt just the same this minute, and he would be utterly devoted to Christian all his life if he, too, would never betray what he had just confessed to him.

"Will you? Will you?" he asked, solemnly, and with a dark glow in his tormented eyes.

"I shall keep silent," Christian replied.

"Then perhaps I can go on living," the boy said.

Christian looked at him, and their eyes met in a strange harmony and understanding.

"And how long did you stay with the girl after that?" Christian asked.

"I don't know. But one morning she said she couldn't keep me any longer and I'd have to go. All the previous time my consciousness hadn't been clear. I must have talked as in delirium. The girl did all she could for me; my condition went to her heart. She sat at the bedside for hours and held my hands. After I left her I wandered about in the suburbs and in the woods, I don't know where. At last I came here. I don't know why I came to you, except that it seemed as though Ruth were sending me to you. You seemed to be the only human being that existed for me in all the world. But what am I to do now? What is going to happen?"

Christian reflected for several seconds before he answered with a strange smile: "We must wait for him."

"For him? For whom?"

"For him."

And again their eyes met.

It was late at night, but they did not think of sleeping.

XV

In addition to the room which his mother gave him, Niels Heinrich had another lodging at a tinsmith's in Rheinsberger Street on the fourth floor. On the day after his conversation with Christian he moved away from there. He did it because too many people knew that he lodged here. Also he couldn't sleep there any more. He slept half an hour, at most; then he lay awake smoking cigarettes, tossing from side to side. From time to time he laughed a dry, rattling laugh, whenever the recollection of something which that man Wahnschaffe had said became particularly vivid.

Who was that man, anyhow? You could think till your brain cracked. That man!

Curiosity was like a conflagration in Niels Heinrich.

He took a room in Demminer Street with a grocer named Kahle. The room was immediately over the shop. The big sign saying "Eggs, Butter, Cheese" almost covered the low window; consequently there was little light in that hole. In addition the flooring and the walls were so thin that one could hear the ringing of the shop bell, the talk of the customers, and all other sounds. There he lay again and smoked cigarettes and thought of that man.

That man and he—there was no place in the world for them both. That was the upshot of his reflections.

Kahle demanded his rent money in advance. Niels Heinrich said that that demand offended his honour; he always paid on the last of the month. Kahle answered that that might be

so, but that it was his custom to get rent in advance. Kahle's wife—lean as a nail and with tall hair-dressing—screamed and became vulgar at once. Niels Heinrich contented himself with a few dry insults and promised to pay on the third.

He tried to work in a factory. But hammer and drill seemed to offer a conscious resistance to him; the wheels and flying belts seemed to whirl through his body, and the regular working-hours to smother him. After the noon-rest it was found that one of the machines was out of order. A screw was loose, and only the vigilance of the machinist had prevented a disaster. He declared to both the foreman and the engineer that the trouble was due to the deliberate act of a rogue; but investigation proved fruitless.

He had been ruined, so far as work was concerned, Niels Heinrich said to himself; and since he needed money he went to the widow. She said that all her available money consisted of sixteen marks. She offered him six. It wasn't enough. "Boy, you look a sight!" she cried, frightened. He told her roughly not to put on airs, and added that she certainly couldn't expect him to be satisfied with a few dirty pennies. She whined and explained that business was wretchedly slack; it hardly paid to tell people's fortunes any more. She seemed to have nothing but ill-luck and to have lost her skill. Niels Heinrich answered darkly that he'd go to the colonies; he'd sail next week, and then she'd be rid of him. The widow was moved, and produced three small gold coins.

One he gave to Kahle.

Then he went to Griebenow's gin shop, next to a dancing hall, finally to a notorious dive in a cellar.

He was a changed man—everybody said that, and he stared at them in an evil way. Nothing had any savour to him. Everything was disjointed; the world seemed to be coming apart. His fingers itched to jerk the lamps from their hooks. If he saw two people whispering together, it made him feel like raving; he wanted to pick up a chair, and bring it crashing

down on their skulls. A woman made advances to him; he caught her so roughly by the neck that she screamed with terror. Her sweetheart called him to account, and drew his knife; the eyes of both blazed with hatred. The keeper of the dive, and several others in whose interest it was to have the peace kept, effected a partial reconciliation. The fellow's mien was still menacing, but Niels Heinrich laughed his goat-like laugh. What could that fellow do to him? What could any of them do to him? Swine! All men, all—swine! What did they matter?

But there were four little words that he couldn't get away from. "I shall expect you." And these words sounded into the jabbering and slavering of the curs about him. "I shall expect you." And how that man had stood up in front of him! Niels Heinrich drew in his lips with his teeth; and his own flesh disgusted him.

"'I shall expect you.' All right, old boy! You can go on expecting till you're blue in the face.

"'I shall expect you.' Aw, can't a man get no rest? Keep still or I'll knock your teeth down your throat.

"'I shall expect you.' Yes, and you'll meet me some day—in hell.

"'I shall expect you.'"

New witnesses had appeared. In both Wisbyer and Stolpische Streets there were people who had last seen Ruth Hofmann in the company of a girl and of a huge butcher's dog. All suspicious houses in Prenzlauer Alley had been searched. There were dives in plenty, but the place called "Adele's Rest" attracted particular attention. In it was found a dog like the one described—a masterless dog, to be sure. Some said the dog had belonged to a Negro who worked in a circus; others that it had come from the stock-yards.

In the cellar traces of the murder were discovered. A worm-eaten board found behind a partition was black with blood. When the deed was done it must have rested on two

wooden frames that still remained in the cellar. When the masterless dog was taken into the cellar, he howled. Between fifteen and twenty persons, including the innkeeper, the barmaid, frequenters of the inn, and dwellers in the house, were subjected to rigorous cross-questioning. Among the latter Molly Gutkind appeared highly suspicious by reason of her confused answers and perturbed demeanour. She was arrested and held as a witness.

Niels Heinrich had been to see her the night before. His private inquiries had confirmed the rumours that had previously come to him. It was undoubtedly she who had given refuge to the unknown boy. He determined to put on the thumbscrews. He was an expert at that.

His general impression was that she could hardly become a source of direct danger to him, but that she had gained a general notion of what must have happened. And when he recalled what Wahnschaffe had told him concerning Ruth's brother, the connection was quite clear. If only he could have laid his hands on the boy, he would have seen to it that the latter didn't wag his damned tongue for a while at least. It was the rottenest luck that took just him to the Little Maggot's house. Now he'd have to make the wench harmless some way. Although he couldn't extract three coherent words from her, and though she trembled like a straw beneath his gaze, yet she betrayed the knowledge she had gained from the boy's delirious talk and had completed from what had transpired later. She wept copiously and confessed that she hadn't left the house since then in her terror of meeting any one. Niels Heinrich told her icily that if she had any interest in her own life and didn't want to ruin the boy into the bargain, she'd better not behave as much like a fool and an idiot as she had toward him. He knew a certain person who, if he got wind of her chatter, would wring her neck in five minutes. She'd better take the train and fade away quickly. Where was her home—in Pasewalk or Itzehoe? And if she didn't fade

away in double-quick time, he'd help her along! At that she sobbed and said she couldn't go home. Her father had threatened to kill her; her mother had cursed her for the disgrace she had brought on them. He said if he came back to-morrow and still found her here, she'd have to dance to a less agreeable tune.

Next day she was arrested. On the day following Niels Heinrich was told that the Little Maggot, unwatched by her fellow-prisoners, had hanged herself by night on the window-bars of her cell.

He gave an appreciative nod.

But security in this one direction meant little to him. The net was being drawn tighter. There was whispering everywhere. Furtive glances followed him. Often he swung around wildly as though he would grasp some pursuer. Money was harder and harder to get. All that Karen had left brought him scarcely fifty talers. And everything that had once given him pleasure now filled him with loathing. It wasn't an evil conscience; that conception was wholly unknown to him. It was contempt of life. He could hardly force himself to get up in the morning. The day was like melting, rancid cheese. Now and then he thought of flight. He was clever enough; he could make a fool of spies and detectives without much exertion. He'd find a place where they wouldn't follow; he had planned it all out: first he'd leave on foot, then take a train, next a ship—if necessary as a stowaway in the coal-bunkers. It had been done before and done successfully. But what was the use? First of all he'd have to clear things up between himself and—that man! First he'd have to find out what that man knew and make him eat humble-pie. He couldn't have that danger at his back. The man expected him. Very well. He'd go.

Though this reasoning may but have disguised an impulse stronger than hatred and sinister curiosity, the impulse itself was of driving and compelling force. He set out on that

errand several times. At first he would be calm and determined, but whenever he saw the street and the house he would turn back. His restlessness turned into choking rage, until at last the suspense became insufferable. It was Friday; he delayed one more day. On Saturday he delayed until evening; then he went. He wandered about the house for a little, loitered in the doorway and in the yard. Then he saw a light in Christian's room and entered.

XVI

Letitia with the countess and her whole train moved into a magnificently furnished apartment on Prince Bismarck Street near the Reichstag. Crammon took rooms in the Hotel de Rome. He didn't like the modern Berlin hotels, with their deceptive veneer of luxury. He didn't, indeed, like the city, and his stay in it gave him a daily sense of discomfort. Even when he strolled Unter den Linden or in the Tiergarten he was an image of joylessness. The collar of his fur-coat was turned up, and of his face nothing was visible but his morose eyes and his small but rather ignobly shaped nose.

The solitary walks increased his hypochondria more and more.

"Child, you are ruining me," he said to Letitia one Sunday morning, as she outlined to him her programme for the week's diversions.

She looked at him in astonishment. "But auntie gets twenty thousand a year from the head of the house of Brainitz," she cried. "You've heard her say so herself."

"I've heard," Crammon replied. "But I've seen nothing. Money is something that one has to see in order to have faith in it."

"Oh, what a prosaic person you are!" Letitia said. "Do you think auntie is lying?"

"Not exactly. But her personal relations to arithmetic

may be called rather idealistic. From her point of view a cipher more or less matters no more than a pea more or less in a bag of peas. But a cipher is something gigantic, my dear, something demonic. It is the great belly of the world; it is mightier than the brains of an Aristotle or the armies of an empire. Reverence it, I beseech you."

"How wise you are, how wise," Letitia said, sadly. "By the way," she added in a livelier tone, "auntie is ill. She has heart trouble. The doctor saw her and wrote her a prescription; a new remedy that he's going to try on her—a mixture of bromine and calcium."

"Why precisely bromine and calcium?" Crammon asked irritably.

"Oh, well, bromine is calming and calcium is stimulating," Letitia chattered, quite at random, hesitated, stopped, and broke into her charming laughter. Crammon, like a schoolteacher, tried for a while to preserve his dignity, but finally joined in her laughter. He threw himself into a deep armchair, drew up a little table on which was a bowl of fruit and little golden knives, and began to peel an apple. Letitia, sitting opposite him with a closed book in her hand, watched him with delicate and cunning attention. His graceful gestures pleased her. The contrast he afforded between plumpness and grace of movement always delighted her.

"I am told that you're flirting with Count Egon Rochlitz," Crammon said, while he ate his apple with massive zest. "I should like to sound a warning. The man is a notorious and indiscriminate Don Juan; all he requires is hips and a bosom. Furthermore, he is up to the eyes in debt; the only hope of his creditors is that he makes a rich marriage. Finally, he is a widower and the father of three small girls. Now you are informed."

"It's awfully nice and kind of you to tell me," Letitia replied. "But if I like the man, why should your moral scruples keep me from continuing to like him? Nearly all

men chase after women; all men have debts; very few have three little daughters, and I think that's charming. He is clever, cultivated, and distinguished, and has the nicest voice. A man who has an agreeable voice can't be quite bad. But I'm not proposing to marry him. Surely you're not such a bad, stubborn old stepfather that you think I mean to marry every man who . . . who, well, who has an agreeable voice? Or are you afraid, you wicked miser, that I'll try to extract a dowry from you? I'm sure that's the cause of your very bad humour. Come, Bernard, confess! Isn't it so? "

Smiling she stood in front of him with a jesting motion of command. She touched his forehead with the index-finger of one hand; the other she raised half threateningly, half solemnly.

Crammon said: " Child, you are once more omitting the respect due me. Consider my whitening locks, my years and experience. Be humble and learn of me, and don't mock at your venerable progenitor. My humour? Well, it isn't the best in the world, I admit. Ah, it was better once. You seem not to know that somewhere in this city, far beyond our haunts, in its slums and morasses, there lives one who was dear to me above all men—Christian Wahnschaffe. You too, in some hoary antiquity, threw out your line after him. Do you remember? Ah, how long ago that is! That would have been a catch. And I, ass that I was, opposed that charming, little intrigue. Perhaps everything might have turned out differently. But complaint is futile. Everything is over between us. There is no path for me to where he is; and yet my soul is driven and goaded toward him, and while I sit here in decent comfort, I feel as though I were committing a scoundrelly action."

Letitia had opened her eyes very wide while he spoke. It was the first time since the days at Wahnschaffe Castle that any one had spoken to her of Christian. His image arose, and

she felt within her breast the faint beating of the wings of dread. There was a sweetness in that feeling and a poignancy . . . . One had to be as capable of forgetting as she was, in order to be able to recapture for a moment, in the deep chiming of a memoried hour, the keen emotion of a long ago.

She questioned him. At first he answered reluctantly, sentence by sentence; then, urged on by her impatience, his narrative flowed on. The utter astonishment of Letitia flattered him; he painted his picture in violent colours. Her delicate face mirrored the fleeting emotions of her soul. In her responsive imagination and vibrant heart everything assumed concreteness and immediate vividness. She needed no interpretations; they were all within her. She gazed into that unknown darkness full of presage and full of understanding. In truth, it all seemed familiar to her, familiar like a poem, as though she had lived with Christian all that time, and she knew more than Crammon could tell her, infinitely more, for she grasped the whole, its idea and form, its fatefulness and pain. She glowed and cried: "I must go to him." But picturing that meeting, she grew frightened, and imagined a rapt look she would use, and Crammon's lack of intensity annoyed her, and his whine of complaint seemed senseless to her.

"I always felt," she said, with gleaming eyes, "that there was a hidden power in him. Whenever I had wicked little thoughts and he looked at me, I grew ashamed. He could read thoughts even then, but he did not know it."

"I have heard you say cleverer things than you are doing now," Crammon said, mockingly. But her enthusiasm moved him, and there welled up in him a jealousy of all the men who stretched out their hands after her.

"I shall go to him," she said, smiling, "and ease my heart in his presence."

"You were wiser in those days when you played at ball

in that beautiful room while the lightning flashed," Crammon murmured, lost in memories. "Has madness overtaken you, little girl, that you would act the part of a Magdalene?"

"I'd like, just once, to live for a month in utter loneliness," Letitia said, yearningly.

"And then?"

"Then perhaps I should understand the world. Ah, everything is so mysterious and so sad."

"Youth! Youth! Thy words are fume and folly!" Crammon sighed, and reached for a second apple.

At this point the dressmaker arrived with a new evening gown for Letitia. She withdrew to her room, and after a little while she reappeared, excited by her frock, and demanding that Crammon admire her, since she felt worthy of admiration. Yet a patina of melancholy shimmered on her, and even while she imagined the admiring looks that would soon be fixed on her—for Crammon's did not suffice her—she dreamed with a sense of luxury of renunciation and of turning from the world.

And while she went to her aunt to collect the tribute of that lady's noisier admiration, she still dreamed of renunciation and of turning from the world.

A bunch of roses was brought her. But even while she gave herself up to their beauty and fragrance with a characteristic completeness, she grew pale and thought of Christian's hard and sombre life; and she determined to go to him. Only that night there was a ball at the house of Prince Radziwill.

There she met Wolfgang Wahnschaffe, but avoided him with an instinctive timidity. She was a great success. Her nature and fate had reached a peak of life and exercised an assured magic from which, in innocent cunning, she wrung all possible advantages.

On the way home in the motor she asked Crammon: "Tell me, Bernard, doesn't Judith live in Berlin too? Do you ever

hear from her? Is she happy with her actor? Why don't we call on her?"

"No one will prevent you from calling on her," answered Crammon. The snow was falling thickly. "She lives in Matthäikirch Street. I cannot tell you whether she is happy; it doesn't interest me. One would have a lot to do if one insisted on finding out whether the women who drag our friends to the nuptial couch discover the game to have been worth the candle or not. One thing is certain—Lorm is no longer what he was, the incomparable and unique. I once called him the last prince in a world doomed to hopeless vulgarization. That is all over. He is going downhill, and therefore I avoid him. There is nothing sadder on earth than a man who deteriorates and an artist who loses himself. And it is the woman's fault. Ah, yes, you may laugh—it is her fault."

"How cruel you are, and how malevolent," said Letitia, and sleepily leaned her cheek against his shoulder.

She determined to visit Judith. It seemed to her like a preparation for that other and more difficult visit, which she might thus delay for a little while, and to which her courage was not yet equal. It lured her when she thought of it as an adventure; but a voice within her told her that she must not let it be one.

XVII

Every time Christian saw Johanna Schöntag she seemed more emaciated and more worn. Beneath his observant glance she smiled, and that glance was meant to deceive him. She thought herself well hidden under her wit and her little harlequin-like grimaces.

She usually appeared toward evening to sit with Michael for an hour or two. She felt it to be her duty. She pretended to be utterly frivolous; yet when she had assumed a task she was pedantically faithful in its execution. On the day when she observed that the boy's improvement had reached

a point which made her service unnecessary, so vivid a look betokening her sense of futility stole into her face that Michael gazed at her and conceived a definite idea of her character. Checked though it still was by his old terror of human beings, gratitude for her sacrifices shone in his eyes. She began to employ his thoughts; her ways were so alien and yet so familiar. He could not rise to the point of frank communication, but when she rose to go he begged her to stay a little longer. Then the habitual silence fell between them, and Johanna, not really reading, let her tormented eyes glide over the page of some French or English novel that she had brought with her. But this time he put a question to her, and after a while another, and then another; and thus arose conversations in which they sought and explored each other. Johanna was by turns superior or mocking or motherly or elusive. She had weapons and veils in plenty. What he said was didactic or shy, or sudden and heated. Her sayings were often double-edged, and confused him; then she would laugh her sharp laughter, and he would be disillusioned and hurt.

He asked her to tell him whence she came, who she was, what she was doing, and she told him of her girlhood and her parents' house. To him who was familiar with poverty alone it sounded like a fairy-tale. He said: "You are beautiful," and she really seemed so to him, and his naïve homage made her blush and gave her a little inner courage. But her hands, he added, were not the hands of a rich girl. She seemed surprised, and answered with an expression of self-hatred that her hands, like a cripple's hump or the devil's splay foot, were the symbol of what she really was.

Michael shook his head; but he now understood her poor, chilled soul with its infinite yearning and its infinite disappointment. When he asked her what was her aim in life and what her occupation, she looked at him with disturbed surprise. What aim or occupation was there for a creature like herself? On another occasion, driven by the desire for

self-torment, she revealed to him the complete emptiness of her life. It was a bad joke that fate was playing on her, a medicine one had to swallow in order to be healed; and healing was where life is not.

She chatted in this strain, but told him not to be bitter. It wasn't worth while; the world was too trivial, grey, and wretched. "If only there weren't so many people in it," she sighed, and wrinkled her forehead in her comic way. Yet she was ashamed before the lad too, and became conscious of the fact that her words were blasphemous. Her feeling was a torment to herself, and she did not perceive that it communicated warmth to another. Timidly she tried to measure the young lad's power of comprehension by his terrible experience, of which she knew no details, or by the sombre earnestness of his mind that made him seem maturer than his years. And she sank even lower in her own esteem when she saw him thoughtful and moved.

But precisely the secret wound of her weakness, which she revealed to him, and the lacerating conflict which she carried on with herself—these brought an awakening to him and stirred his will to life. He said: "You should have known Ruth." A strange shadow and yet a living contradiction of Ruth came to him from Johanna. He said again and again: "You should have known Ruth." To her question why, he had no answer but a sudden radiance in his glance in which Ruth seemed hitherto but to have slumbered. But now her image was a flame of fire that guided him.

Johanna said to Christian: "I don't believe your protégé needs me any longer. You certainly don't. So I'm superfluous, and had better get out of the way."

"I want very much to talk to you," said Christian. "I have wanted to beg you for long to talk to me. Will you come at the same hour to-morrow, or shall I come to you? I shall be glad to do whatever you like."

She grew pale, and said she would come.

XVIII

She arrived at five o'clock. The darkness had fallen. They went into Karen's old rooms, since Michael was in Christian's. To the latter's surprise the boy had suddenly expressed the desire for instruction and for a teacher to-day. He had also asked how his life was to be arranged in future, where he had better go and to whom, and from whom he might hope for help, since he was unwilling to be a burden to Christian any longer. His words and demeanour showed a determination which he had never yet displayed. Christian had not been able to answer his questions satisfactorily at once. The change caused him, first of all, astonishment; and while he preceded Johanna to light the lamp, he reflected on the difficult decision ahead.

The door to the room in which Karen had died was locked. A feeble fire of wood that Isolde Schirmacher had lit at Christian's bidding burned in the oven. She came in now, put on another log, and tripped out again.

Johanna sat on the sofa and looked about her expectantly. She trembled at the thought of the first word she would hear and the first she would speak. She had not taken off her cloak. Her neck and chin were buried in its collar of fur.

"It's a little uncanny here," she said softly at last, since Christian's silence was so prolonged.

Christian sat down beside and took her hand. "You look so full of suffering, Johanna," he said. "What is the cause of your suffering? Would it ease you to speak out? Tell me about it. You will reply that I cannot help you. And that is true; one can never really help another. Yet once you communicate yourself to a friend, the troubles within no longer rot in dull stagnation. Don't you think so?"

"You come to me so late," Johanna whispered, with a shudder, and drew up her shoulders, "so very, very late."

"Too late?"

"Too late."

Christian reflected sadly for a little. He grasped her hand more firmly, and asked timidly: "Does he torment you? What is there between him and you?"

She started and stared at him, and then collapsed again. She smiled morbidly and said: "I'd be grateful to anyone who took an axe and killed me. It's all I'm worth."

"Why, Johanna?"

"Because I threw myself away to roll in filth where it's thickest and most horrible," she cried out, in a cutting voice that was full of lamentation too, while her lips quivered, and she looked up.

"You see both yourself and others falsely," said Christian. "Everything within you is distorted. All that you say torments you, and all that you hide chokes you. Have a little pity on yourself."

"On myself?" She laughed a mirthless laugh. "On a thing like myself? It would be waste. Nothing is needed but the axe, the axe." Her words changed to a wild sob. Then came an icy silence.

"What did you do, Johanna, to make you so desperate? Or what was done to you?"

"You come too late. Oh, if you had asked me before, just asked, just once. It is too late. There was too much empty time. The time was the ruin of me. I've wasted my heart."

"Tell me how."

"Once there was one who opened the dark and heavy portal just a tiny bit. Then I thought: it will be beautiful now. But he slammed the door shut in my face. And the crash—I still feel it in my bones. It was rash and foolish in me. I should not have had that glimpse of the lovely things beyond the gate."

"You are right, Johanna; I deserve it. But tell me how it is with you now? Why are you so torn and perturbed?"

She did not answer for a while. Then she said: "Do you know the old fairy-tale of the goose-girl who creeps into the iron oven to complain of her woe? 'O Falada, as thou hangest, O Princess, as thou goest, if thy mother knew of thy fate, the heart in her bosom would be broken.' I haven't taken a vow of silence, and I haven't a burning oven for refuge, but I can't look at anyone or let him look at me. Go over by the window and take your eyes from me, and I'll tell you of my woes."

With serious promptness Christian obeyed. He sat down by the window and looked out.

With a high, almost singing voice Johanna began. "You know that I got caught in the snares of that man who was once your friend. You see there was too much time in the world and the time was too empty. He acted as though he would die if he didn't have me. He put me to sleep with his words and broke my will, my little rudimentary will, and took me as one takes a lost thing by the roadside that no one wants or claims. And when he had me in his grip the misery began. Day and night he tortured me with questions, day and night, as though I'd been his thing from my mother's womb. No peace was left in me, and I was like one blinded by his own shame. And one day I ran away and came here, and it was just the day on which Michael came in after the terrible thing had happened to him, and of course you had no eyes for me and I—I saw more clearly than before how low I had fallen and what I had made of my life."

She stared down emptily for a moment; then she shut her eyes and continued. There had been an evening on which she had felt so desolate and deserted that she had envied each paving stone because it lay beside another. And so she had suddenly, with all the strength of all the yearning in her, wished for a child. She couldn't explain just how it had come over her—that insane yearning after a child, after something of flesh and blood that she might love. Just as that day in

Christian's room she had turned his behaviour into an envious experiment and test, and had wondered in suspense how he would take and withstand the utter misery of Michael; so, on that other day, she had put her own life to the test, and had made everything dependent on whether she would have a child or not. And when Amadeus had come, she had thrown herself at him—coldly and calculatingly. She wondered whether such things often happened in the world or had, indeed, ever happened before. But as time passed it became clear that her wish was not to be fulfilled and she was not even capable of what any woman of the people can accomplish. She wasn't good enough for even that.

But in the meantime fate had played its direst trick on her. She had begun to love the man. It could not have come about differently, for he seemed so like herself—so full of envy, so avoided of men, so enmeshed and helpless within. The likeness in his soul had conquered her. To be sure, she could not tell whether it was really love, or something strange and terrible that is written of in no book and has no name. But if it was love to cling to some last contact while waiting for the end, to be extinguished and set on fire again, so that between fire and fire no breath was one's own, and one wore an alien face and spoke alien words; if it was love to be ashamed and remorseful and flee from one's own consciousness and drag oneself about in terror of the senses and of the spirit and own no thing on earth, no friend or sister or flower or dream—if such were love, well, it had been hers. But it hadn't lasted long. Amadeus had shown signs of coldness and satiety. He had been paralysed. When he had devoured everything within her that could be devoured, he had been tired and had given her to understand that she was in the way. A cold horror had struck her, and she had gone. But the horror was still in her heart and everything in her was old and cold. She could never forget the man's coarse face in that last hour—his scorn and satisfaction. Now

she could neither laugh nor cry any more; she was ashamed. She would like to lie down very gently and wait for death. She was so frightfully tired, and disgust of life filled her to the brim.

She stopped, and Christian did not move. Long minutes passed. Then Johanna arose and went over to him. Without stirring she gazed with him out into the darkness, and then laid a ghostly hand upon his shoulder. "If my mother knew of my fate, the heart in her bosom would be broken," she whispered.

He understood that touch, which sought a refuge, and her silent beseeching. Resting his chin upon his hand, he said: "O men, men, what are these things you do!"

"We despair," she answered, drily, and with sardonic lips.

Christian arose, took her head between his two hands, and said: "You must be on your guard, Johanna, against yourself."

"The devil has fetched me," she answered; but at the same moment she became aware of the power of his touch. She became pale and reeled and pulled herself together. She looked into his eyes, first waveringly, then firmly. She tried to smile, and her smile was full of pain. Then it became less full of herself, and lastly, after a deep breath, showed a shimmer of joy.

He took his hands away. He wanted to say something more, but he felt the insufficiency and poverty of all words.

She went from him with lowered head. But on her lips there was still that smile of many meanings which she had won.

XIX

It happened that Christian, sleeping in the rooms upstairs, was awakened by the piercing cries of the Stübbe children. He slipped into his clothes and went over.

On the table stood a smoking kerosene lamp; next to it lay a baby huddled in greasy rags. From a sack of straw two children had risen up. They were clad in ragged shirts, and, clinging despairingly to each other, uttered their shrieks of terror. A fourth child, a boy of five, indescribably ragged and neglected, bent over a heap of broken plates and glasses. He hid his face in his hands and howled. The fifth child, a girl of eight or nine, stood by her mother, who lay quite still on the floor, and lifted her thin, beseeching arms and folded hands toward the monster who was her father, and who struck the woman blow after vicious blow in the beastliness of his rage. He used the leg of a chair, and under the mad fury of his blows terrible wounds appeared on the body of the woman, who uttered no sound. Only now and then she twitched. Her face was of a greyish blue. The bodice and the red petticoat she wore were shredded, and from every rent dripped her blood.

Stübbe's madness increased with every blow. In his eyes there was a ghastly glitter; slime and foam flecked his beard; his hair stood on end and was stiff with sweat, and his swollen face was a dark violet hue. Sounds, half laughter, half gurgling, then again moans and curses and stertorous breathing and whistling came from his gullet. One blow fell on the beseeching child. She dropped on her face and moaned.

Christian grasped the man. With both hands he strangled him; with tenfold strength he fought him down. He felt an unspeakable horror of the flesh his fingers touched; in his horror it seemed to him that the wretched room became a conical vault in the emptiness of which he and this beast swayed to and fro. He smelt the whiskey fumes that rose from the beast's open gullet, and his horror assumed odour and savour and burned his eyes. And as he struggled on—the claws of the man, who despite his drunkenness had a bear's strength, against his throat, that belly against his, those knees close to his own—this moment seemed to stretch and stretch to an

hour, a month, a year, and fate seemed to force him into a fatal hole. All nearness seemed to become closer and turn into touch. Man, the world, the sky—all were upon him, close as his own skin. And this became the meaning of it to him—deeper, deeper, closer, closer into the horrible and menacing.

A thin, little voice sounded: "Please don't hurt father! Please, please don't." It was the voice of the little girl. She got up and approached Christian and clung to his arm.

Stübbe, gasping for air, collapsed. Christian stood there, pale as death. He smelt and felt that there was blood on him. People came in; the noise had roused them from their beds. A woman took the little children and sought to soothe them. One man kneeled by the murdered woman; another went for water. There were some who cried out and were excited; others looked on calmly. After a while a policeman appeared. Stübbe lay in a corner and snored; the lamp still smoked and stank. A second policeman drifted in, and took counsel with the first whether Stübbe was to be left here till morning or removed at once.

Christian still stood there, pale as death. Suddenly every eye was turned upon him. A dull silence fell on the room. One of the policemen cleared his throat. The child looked up at him breathlessly. It had a colourless, stern old face. Its unnaturally large, blue-rimmed eyes were filled with the immeasurable misery of the life it had lived. Christian's look seemed to charm the child. The little figure seemed to grow and twine itself about that look like a sapling, and to lose its cold and suffering and sickness and fear.

Christian recognized the heroic soul of the little creature, its innocence and guiltlessness and rich, undying heart.

"Come with me, I have a bed for you," he said to the child, and led it past the people and out of the room.

The little girl went with him willingly. In his room he touched her and raised her up. He could hardly believe such

delicate limbs and joints capable of motion. So soon as she lay on his bed and was covered she fell into deep slumber.

He sat beside her and gazed into the colourless, stern, old face.

XX

And again, while he sat there, a landscape seemed to be about him.

On either side of a marshy path bare trees were standing, and their limbs protruded confusedly and crookedly into the air. The light was dim, as though it were a very early autumn morning. Heavy clouds hung down, mirroring their ragged masses in pools and puddles. Here and there were structures of brick, all half finished. One had no roof and another no windows. Everywhere were mortar-pits full of white mortar, and tools lay on the ground—trowels and spirit-levels and shovels and spades; also barrows and beams. No human being was in sight. The loneliness was damp and mouldy and ugly, and seemed to be waiting for man. All objects shared that tense and menacing mood of expectancy—the thin light falling from the ragged clouds, the marshy fluid in the ruts, the trees which were like dead, gigantic insects thrown on their backs, the unfinished brick structures, the mortar-pits and tools.

The only living creature was a crow sitting by the roadside, and observing Christian with a spiteful glance. Each time he approached the bird, it fluttered silently up and settled down a little distance ahead on a bare tree; and there it waited until he approached again. In the round eyes that glimmered brown as polished beans, there was a devilish jeering, and Christian grew tired of the pursuit. The moisture penetrated his garments, the mud filled his shoes, which stuck in the ooze at every step; the uncanny twilight obliterated all outlines, and deceived him in regard to the distances of objects. Exhausted, he leaned against a low tree-trunk, and waited

in his turn. The crow hopped and flew, now farther, now nearer; it seemed vexed at his waiting and finally alighted on the roadside, and the polished bean-like eyes lost their treacherous expression and were slowly extinguished.

A prophetic shiver passed through space. The breath of the landscape was Ruth's name; it strained to proclaim her fate.

And Christian waited.

XXI

Niels Heinrich hesitated a few minutes before he entered the room.

It happened to be empty, so that he was alone for a little while. In this short time he succeeded in getting possession of the string of pearls.

When Niels Heinrich arrived, Christian was just about to accompany the student Lamprecht for a walk. He desired to engage him as Michael's teacher, and he could not speak quite openly to him in the boy's presence. He was startled and found it difficult to control himself. To leave at this moment seemed hazardous. Niels Heinrich, who was moody and irresponsible, might not await his return, nor was it advisable to leave him alone with Michael. On the other hand, Christian had waited with electrically charged nerves for this important interview. He had waited from day to day, and he desired to gather his inner forces and subdue the excitement which Niels Heinrich's silent entering had caused him. That would take time, and his indecision and embarrassment increased while he addressed Niels Heinrich courteously and asked him to be seated. At that moment the door opened again, and Johanna Schöntag came in. Christian received her eagerly, and in overhasty words begged her to stay with Michael until his return; then he would go to the other flat with Herr Engelschall, with whom he had matters to discuss. Johanna was surprised at his impetuousness, and also looked in surprise at Niels Heinrich. Her expression showed very clearly that she didn't know who

the man was, and so Christian was obliged to introduce the two to each other. That seemed to him so absurd a proceeding that he only murmured the names hesitantly. Niels Heinrich grinned; and when Christian begged to be excused for a little while, he shrugged his shoulders.

The echo of Christian's and Lamprecht's steps had hardly died away in the courtyard when Johanna turned to Michael and said: "I was coming in to ask you to go with me to the Memorial Church in Charlottenburg. Cantatas of Bach will be sung. Do come; you have probably never heard anything like it. This gentleman will be so kind as to tell Herr Wahnschaffe where we have gone." She looked at Niels Heinrich, but lowered her eyes at once. He gave her a feeling of profound discomfort. She had felt that discomfort the moment she had entered, and after Christian had gone, it had become so violent that she had made her proposal to Michael solely in order to avoid this hateful presence at any cost. She had had a vague intention earlier of attending the concert, but had dropped it again. The thought of taking the boy along had occurred to her but now.

"Charlottenburg, Memorial Church—all right, I'll tell him," Niels Heinrich said, and crossed his legs. He had been gazing at Michael uninterruptedly, and his gaze had been growing more and more sombre.

Michael had been conscious of a feeling quite akin to Johanna's, but he endured bravely the yellow heat of those eyes. His fingers played nervously with a piece of paper on the table; his mind was seeking a hint, an image, a lost thread; he nodded at Johanna without looking at her, and followed her silently when she touched his arm. She had taken his hat and coat from the hook, and so they went.

Issuing from the house they saw Christian at the nearest corner, standing with Lamprecht under a lantern. Hastily they walked in the opposite direction.

Niels Heinrich got up. He lit a cigarette, and strode up

and down with clicking steps. He stopped in front of a chest of drawers and tried each drawer. He did that mechanically, without curiosity and without definite expectation. The chest had a little top made of small, carved columns; this, too, contained a drawer. He pulled it open, and started violently as though he had been stung. Before his eyes lay a heap of enormous pearls.

Christian had almost forgotten them in the unlocked little drawer. Several days after Karen's death Botho von Thüngen had told him that he was going to Frankfort. Members of his family were gathering there and a conference was to be held. Christian thought of taking advantage of this opportunity to send the pearls to his mother. A dreamy memory of their high value made him hesitate to entrust them to the mails. Thüngen had declared himself most willing to undertake the commission; but he never went to Frankfort. His relatives cast him off mercilessly; they were trying to get the courts to declare him irresponsible; their hue and cry robbed him of all repose, of every home, of all work. He was stripped of all means, and he had not been able to hold the woman whom he had married. She had fallen into deeper degradation than that from which he had sought to save her. In this utter distress of his, Christian had become his sole refuge and support.

Thus, in his anxiety over his friend, Christian had scarcely thought of the pearls for days. Though he had that faint memory of their value, no authentic impulse bade him secure them more carefully than in that open drawer, where Niels Heinrich's furtive instinct had discovered them.

A long, slow, astonished whistle; a quivering of the emaciated cheeks; a look of hunger and one of criminal determination. Then a hesitation, as though even this marvellous treasure were of no import any more; and then again a burning in his eyes. The pearls promised unheard-of delights. And then again disgust: what for? He must fight

out his conflict with this man. Behind him was a ravenous pack: witnesses, spies, hints, accomplices, and also the dog, the cellar, the blood, the body, the head, the Little Maggot hanged by the cord of her petticoat. And face to face with him was this man. We'll see; we'll measure our strength.

He reflected for some moments; then he flung out both hands, and the pearls were in his possession. There was a soft clinking, a gathering up, a shoving, and they disappeared in his trousers pocket. The pocket stuck out, but his coat hid the fact. If the man looked into the drawer and raised an alarm, why, one could fling the stuff back at him.

When Christian returned, Niels Heinrich was sitting on a chair and smoking.

XXII

"Forgive me," said Christian. "It was an urgent appointment. . . ." He interrupted himself, as he observed that Niels Heinrich was in the room alone.

"The young lady wants you to know that she took the boy and went to Charlottenburg to go to church," Niels Heinrich said.

Christian was amazed. He answered: "So much the better. That leaves us undisturbed, and we can stay here."

"That's right. We're undisturbed." Next came a pause, and they looked at each other. Christian went to the threshold of the little bedroom to make sure that no one was within, then to the door that led to the hall. He turned the key.

"Why do you lock the door?" Niels Heinrich asked, with raised brows.

"It is necessary," said Christian, "because all the people who come to see me are accustomed to finding the door open."

"Then maybe you'd better blow out the lamp too," Niels Heinrich jeered; "that'd be the sensible thing to do, eh? Dark's a good place for secrets. And we're going to fish for secrets, eh?"

Christian sat down on a chair at the opposite end of the table. He purposely disregarded the other's cynical remark; but his silence and his tense expression aroused Niels Heinrich's rage. Challengingly he leaned back in his chair and spat elaborately on the floor. They sat facing each other as though neither dared lose sight of the other for a second. Yet Christian continued to show his obliging and friendly attitude. Only a quivering of the muscles of his forehead and the peering intensity of his gaze revealed something of what was passing within him.

"Have you discovered anything new?" he finally asked, in his courteous way.

Niels Heinrich lit another cigarette. "Aw, something," he said, and went on to tell that he had in the meantime discovered the woman who had hidden the Jew boy. It had been Molly Gutkind, known as the Little Maggot, and living at "Adele's Rest." He had followed the matter up and got the girl to confess. But on that very day, as the devil would have it, persons had come from the court and questioned her. The poor fool had probably talked more than was good for her. Anyhow, she'd fallen under suspicion and had been put in jail. There she'd evidently lost what little brains she ever had and had hanged herself. She was dead as a door-nail. That's what he wanted to report, since the gentleman seemed to be interested. Now the gentleman knew, and had an idea of his, Niels Heinrich's, willingness to oblige.

He blew clouds of smoke, and twirled his little beard with the fingers of his left hand.

"I knew that," said Christian. "I knew where Michael had been; he confessed it himself. The girl's death was reported to me this morning. Nevertheless I thank you for the trouble you have taken."

No trouble at all; didn't amount to nothing. He was still at the gentleman's service. It seemed to him that the gentleman was given to detective work. Maybe he meant to take

it up professionally later. Maybe the gentleman knew something more? He, Niels Heinrich, was quite willing to be questioned. This was his expansive day. If there was anything the gentleman wanted to know he was not to hesitate but fire away.

He blinked and stared watchfully at Christian's lips.

Christian reflected and lowered his eyes. "Since you're so willing to give information," he answered softly, "tell me why you removed the screw from the machine at Pohl and Pacheke's works? You must remember. . . ."

Niels Heinrich's mouth opened like a trap. The stark horror simply caused his lower jaw to drop.

"You are surprised that I know of the incident," Christian continued. He did not want the other to think that he would try to make him pliant by dealing in mysteries and surprises. "But it's quite natural that I should. The son of Gisevius is a foreman at Pohl and Pacheke's. He told me that you worked there for two days and that the accident happened on one of them. He didn't connect the two acts at all; he simply happened to relate both to me. He had no suspicion; it was clear to no one but myself that you must have done it. I can't tell you the reason, but I had an unmistakable vision of you fumbling at the machine and loosening the screw. I was forced to think of it constantly and to see it constantly. If I am wrong, you must forgive me."

"Don't understand. . . ." The words came heavy with fear and in gasps from Niels Heinrich's lips. "Don't understand that. . . ."

"I had the feeling that the machine seemed to you a living and organized being and therefore an enemy, and aroused in you a desire to murder. Yes, quite clearly and irrefutably, I got the feeling of murder from you. Am I mistaken?"

Niels Heinrich uttered no sound. He could not move. Roots seemed to grow from the floor and entwine themselves

about the chair on which he sat, to creep about his legs, and hold him in an iron grip.

Christian arose. "All that is useless," he said, taking a deep breath.

"What? What is useless?" Niels Heinrich murmured. "What? What then?" The blood in his body grew chill.

His arms pressed to his side, his hands joining below, Christian stood there, and whispered: "Speak! Tell me!"

What was he to speak of? What was he to tell? The neck of Niels Heinrich was like an emptied tube, slack and quivering.

Their eyes met. Words died. The air roared.

Suddenly Christian blew out the lamp. The sudden darkness was like the thud of an explosion. "You were right," he said. "The light would betray us to any passerby. Now we are quite secure, from any outside thing, at all events. What happens here now concerns no one but ourselves. You can do as you choose. You can draw your revolver as you did the other day and fire. I am prepared for that. And since I shall not move from where I sit, you cannot fail to hit me. But perhaps you will wait until you have told me what is to be told and what I must know."

Silence.

"You murdered Ruth."

Silence.

"It was you who lured her into that house and into that cellar, and killed her there."

Silence.

"And you made an accomplice of that poor simpleton, Joachim Heinzen, and by a well-devised plan filled him so full of fear and anguish that he deemed himself alone to be the murderer, and did not venture even to utter your name. How did that come about?"

Silence.

"And how did it come about that Ruth found no mercy in your soul? Ruth! Of all creatures! And that the knife

. . . that the knife in your hand obeyed you . . . and that thereafter you could go and speak and drink, and decide on actions and go from one house to another. With that image and with that deed within you? How is that possible? "

Silence.

Christian's voice had nothing of its old coolness and reserve. It was hoarse and passionate and naked. "What did you want of her? What was your ultimate desire? Why did Ruth have to die? Why? What could she give you by her death? What did you gain through murdering her? "

Suddenly Niels Heinrich's voice uttered a scream and a roar: "Her virginity, man! "

And now it was Christian's turn to be silent.

XXIII

Neither could see the other in the darkness. The heavy shades at the window created a blackness so impenetrable that not even the outlines of things were visible. Neither could see the movements of the other, but they had the sharpest awareness of each other, a horrible and physical awareness, as though they were chained and imprisoned together, forehead to forehead, breath to breath. They lacked no light, for they needed none.

The darkness gave Niels Heinrich a sense of freedom. It gave him an impulse of defiance and boastfulness and shameless self-revealment. It was chaos, massive and terrible. He did not refuse its demand that he should give an accounting of himself. It split and shattered his inward being, and liberated speech. He dared not jeer; he dropped all defences.

The darkness was a maw that spewed forth his deed. He could himself now hear what had happened. Many things seemed new to him as they were uttered. The thought that

yonder a man was listening and dragging your vitals out as though you were a dead animal—there was a certain strange stimulation in the thought. He would turn his mind inside out; then at least that man would trouble him no more. There was time enough later to take proper precautions.

As he was saying, then, it was her virginity. There wasn't no use denying that. Every one knew how a boy like him grew up, with what sort of creatures. Sometimes they were one kind, sometimes another—red or black, sentimental or jolly, a little better, a little lower, but sluttish creatures all. Well, not exactly prostitutes, but mighty near it; on the edge of it—elegant or dirty, fifteen or thirty, every one had a rotten spot. And even if they hadn't exactly the rotten spot yet, they'd turn rotten under one's very hands. And what you got, you couldn't have faith in, and once you had your claws in 'em, it was all over. So that's the way life went—Male on Monday and Lottie on Tuesday and Trine on Wednesday; but the difference wasn't as much as you could put on the tip of a knife. Finally, of course, you got to be like an animal that feeds on everything—wheat and tares, clover and thistles. If it burns—all right; if it tastes good—all right.

Virgins? Sure, you met virgins too. But it was all shoddy and pawed over and second-hand. They'd talk of not staying out late and being afraid of the landlady, and of marrying and buying furniture; and on the third Sunday you had 'em as well trained as poodle dogs. And anyhow, you never knew who'd stirred your soup before you. It was all doubtful, and you had no proper belief in it. Even if sometimes you met a better sort, it wasn't never the best. They'd be coy and kittenish, and there was no naturalness and no honesty. First you had to lie to 'em and make 'em tame, and then when they got scared about being in trouble, they chilled and disgusted you so, you'd like to kill them.

Sailors who had been on long voyages had told him that

they got so sick of the salt-meat and the pickled meat that when they landed and happened to meet a lamb or a rabbit, they felt as if they could tear the living animal limb from limb and devour the warm, fresh flesh. That's what could happen to a man with women; that's what had happened to him when he'd seen the Jewess. The sight of her had gone through and through him. It had pierced him as a red-hot iron will slide through ice. It had whirled him around; all his life he hadn't had no such sensation—as if the lightning had struck him or he'd been bewitched or had drunk a gallon of alcohol. From that moment he had had a twitching in his fingers as though velvet was passing over them; he had felt a terrible avidity to touch something that moves and trembles and is warm, an avidity for the terror of those eyes and her wonderful struggles, as the depth of her soul made moan, and she wept and begged. How she walked in her inviolateness and pride, as in a haze! One wanted to lie down and have her step on one's chest, and look up at her as at a slender column. Jesus and all the Saints! That had done for him and been the end of him! He knew he'd have to have her, if it cost him his eternal weal, which nobody gives a damn for anyhow.

He knew from the start, of course, that a being like that wasn't for the like of him. She was like the sacrament that no one could touch but the priest. He had known that; but there was more to it than that from the start. From the start it had been a matter of life and death. There'd been no doubt about that in him at any time: she'd have to die for him—him! He had lain in wait for her, and she had fled like a deer. It had made him laugh. "You'll come into my net," he had said, and had fixed his eyes and thoughts on her day and night, so that she didn't know no more what to do. She had appeared to him in vision, yes, appeared to him whenever he'd commanded her, and begged him to let her off. And he'd told her that was impossible, that she must

come to him, that her body and blood must become his, and that he must make an end of her. Unless he did, there wasn't no peace on earth for him nor for her either.

So he had thought out his plan. He had persuaded the besotted fool that he was crazy about the Jewess and that she was gone on him too. That had made him quite crazy and he hadn't had an idea left in his skull, and had been soft as mush and had taken every trick and swindle as reality. So they had taken counsel and worked out their plan. They had sent the Jewess a note and had hired out the wench who carried it right afterward to an old acquaintance in Pankow. In the note they'd written to the Jewess that some one wanted her on his bed of death and that his salvation depended on her coming. Sure enough, she had come. The idiot had led her into the cellar. It had been dark there. They had locked the cellar door. Then he had persuaded the idiot to go behind the partition and had given him a bottle of rum, and told him if he so much as made a sound he might as well order his coffin, but if he'd wait, the affair with the Jewess would be fixed up for him. Thereupon he himself had returned to the cellar, and there the Jewess had stood. . . .

He interrupted himself, and felt how the whole being of his invisible neighbour had become a breathless listening, a rapt absorption of every syllable he spoke. It gave him but a scant satisfaction, yet it urged him on. And as he burrowed in his mind and represented what he found there, the events assumed an unnatural size and seemed steeped in an atmosphere fiery-red and violet. He did not so much speak of them as let them speak to him, and thus build themselves up in a guise in which he had never yet seen them. And as he continued, his voice changed. It took on a sharper edge and became hollower, and betrayed for the first time a stirring within, a wildly gathering primordial pain.

She had stood there, he went on, and that had removed his last doubt.

"How?" Christian's voice came, scarcely audible, out of the blackness. "How?"

He said he couldn't describe it. She had looked about with a proud astonishment and yet a twitching of fear about her mouth. She had asked where the person was who had sent for her. On the moon, he had answered. Then what was wanted of her? Why was the iron door locked? Good reasons! Couldn't she be told the reasons? What a voice she had had, like a little silver bell ringing in her throat. The ear drank it in like a wonderful liquor. There weren't many reasons, he had said; there was just one. She didn't understand. He'd try to make it plain. She had said she couldn't think. Then he had taken her by the arm and put his arm about her shoulder and her neck. She had cried out and begun to tremble, run into a corner, and put out her hands to guard herself. The candle-light had fallen straight into her face, which had been like a white rose in the light of a flame. He had rushed toward her, and she had taken refuge behind the table. She had cried for mercy. He had laughed, laughed, utterly beside himself at the little silver bell in her throat. What a woman! God, what a woman! A child still, pure in every fibre, and a woman. It pierced him; it went into his marrow. A man couldn't let such a woman escape him if his next hour were to be spent in hell-fire.

He had soothed her a bit and made pretty speeches and said she should listen to him. She had been willing, and he had spoken. The table with the candle had been between them—he in front of it, she behind it against the wall. He had said there was a terrible necessity; no way out—not for her and not for him. He was like one damned, and she must redeem him. He was panting for her and withering away for her—for her body and soul, blood and breath, and it had been predetermined thus since the world began. He must be close to her and within her, or the whole world would go mad and life burst with poison. He must have her, whether she

was willing or not, through kindness or force. God couldn't help her. There was a law that compelled them both, and the hour had come. She might better yield herself, and give him the heaven he was bound to have.

Thereupon she had whispered with a rigid expression: "No, never, nevermore."

He had gazed at her a long time.

From time to time, with a moist glance upward, she had whispered: "No, never, nevermore."

He had warned her to put away all hope. If she resisted, it would only be the more fearful. And he had laid the knife on the table.

Christian moaned in his supreme pain as he heard this.

Niels Heinrich continued with his fatalistic outer calm. Ruth had tried to make him relent. He would never forget her words, but he could not repeat them. She had spoken feverishly, with glowing eyes, her hair falling over her cheeks; she had lifted her hands in beseeching and leaned across the table, and in her sweet, bell-like voice had spoken of people who needed her, of work and duty, of difficult tasks ahead, and also of the pleasant things in the world. And she had asked him whether nothing in the world was pleasant to him, whether his own life meant nothing to him at all, and he was willing to take up the burden of this crime before man and God. This is what she had said, only her words had been finer and firmer and exacter. At that a rancorous rage had flamed up in his brain, and he had roared at her to stop her crazy jabbering, damned Jewess that she was, and listen to him, listen to what he had to say in reply.

In silence and with a drawn expression, she had listened. Crime, he had said, crime and such talk—there wasn't no sense in that; he didn't know what it meant. It had all been thought out by the people who pay the soldiers and the courts to do their bidding, but who, if it served their purposes, committed the same crimes in the name of the State or the Church

or Progress or Liberty. If a man was strong enough and cunning enough, he didn't give a damn for all their laws. Laws were for fools and cowards. If the individual has got to submit to force, he's got the right to use force too. If he was willing to risk the vengeance and punishment of society, he had a right to satisfy his desires. The only question was whether he was willing to take up the burden of crime, and couldn't be made to stop by the hocus-pocus invented by teachers and parsons. If he, Niels Heinrich, could work his will, there wouldn't be one stone left standing on another, all rules would be wiped out, all order destroyed, all cities blown up sky-high, all wells choked, all bridges broken, all books burned, all roads torn up, and destruction would be preached, and war—war of each against all, all against each, all against all. Mankind wasn't worthy of nothing better.

He could truthfully say that because he had studied people and had seen through them. He had seen nothing but liars and thieves, wretched fools, misers, and the meanly ambitious. He had seen the dogs cringe and creep when they wanted to rise, cringe before those above, snap at those below. He knew the rich with their full bellies and their rotten phrases, and the poor with their contemptible patience. He knew the bribe-takers and the stiff-necked ones, the braggarts and the slinkers, the thieves and forgers, ladies' men and cowards, the harlots and their procurers, the respectable women with their hypocrisy and envy, their pretence and masquerade and play-acting; he knew it all, and it couldn't impress him no more. And there were no real things in the world except stench and misery and avarice and greed and treachery and malevolence and lust. The world was a loathsome thing and had to be destroyed. And any one who had come to see that, must take the last step, the very last, to the place where despair and contempt are self-throttled, where you could go no further, where you heard the Angel of the Last Day beating at the dull walls of the flesh, whither

neither the light penetrated nor the darkness, but where one was alone with one's rage and could feel oneself utterly, and heighten that self and take something sacred and smash it into bits. That was it, that! To take something holy, something pure, and become master of it and grind it to the earth and stamp it out.

Christian had never heard anything more dreadful. He gazed into a broken universe. Even in its pale representation, the fury of hatred burst forth like seething lava, and turned the blossoms of the earth to ashes. Horror had reached its supreme point. The fate of the immemorial race of man was sealed. And yet—the fact that this man had come hither, had had the impulse to reveal himself, that he sat there in the darkness and writhed and spoke of monstrous things and plunged into the great deeps that he had opened—in this very fact Christian perceived a shimmer of most mysterious hope, and a first faint ray of dawn upon a hitherto unknown, uncertain path.

Niels Heinrich continued. Slowly the Jewess had understood and looked at him with her great child's eyes. She had put a question to him, but he couldn't remember what it was. Then she had said that she saw there was no hope for her, and that it was her fate to be his victim. He had answered that her insight did credit to her understanding. Then she asked whether he knew that he was destroying himself; and he had said that he believed in no expiation, and the rest was his business. Anyhow, there had been enough talk; time was pressing, and the end must come. She had asked what she should do, and this question had confounded him, and he had had no answer to it. She had repeated the question, and he had said that the candle was burning down. Then she had asked him whether he could give her the assurance of death. Yes, he could give her that. Wouldn't he let her die before he attacked her? No. She had grasped the knife, but he had wrung it from her. The touch of her hand had

driven him utterly mad. The walls seemed to crunch and the house to thunder. She had begged him to let her die by her own will. He could not do that, he had answered; he must get to her living heart or there was no help for him.

She begged him to grant her a little quarter of an hour; then she would be ready to die. To this he had consented, and gone out and looked after the idiot, who had lain there helpless and drunk as a swine. That had pleased him; now he could put the fellow to what uses he would. This had been proved later when he had dragged him into the cellar; and the swine still thought he could be gotten out of jail if only to the last gasp he didn't mention the name of Niels Heinrich.

When he had returned to the Jewess, he had found her leaning against the wall with closed eyes. Her face had been very pale, but she had smiled from time to time. He had asked her why she was smiling and she had not answered, but looked at him most strangely, as though she were trying to remember something. He had gone to her behind the table and she had not stirred, and so he had grasped her shoulders. She had lifted her hands, and then he had seen that, while he was outside, she had severed the veins of both her wrists, and the thick blood was dripping down. She must have done it with a shard of glass that stuck between the bricks of the wall. He had been swept into a storm of madness, as though some one were upon him to rob him of her, and he had caught her by the hair and hurled her on the floor.

And she had uttered one cry, one single, long cry. That cry he still heard, always . . . always. . . .

She had become his. He felt no remorse; he would feel none. But that cry—he heard it always and forever.

Silence came upon him. The stillness in that dark chamber was so great that it seemed to gather in the corners and threaten to burst the walls asunder.

XXIV

More than half an hour had passed in this complete stillness when Christian arose to light the lamp. The base and the chimney tinkled in his trembling hands. He feared the very functioning of his senses—sight, hearing, smell. Every perception was like a wound in consciousness and dripped like poison into the core of life. Slowly the turbid outlines reformed an image of reality.

Both from within and from without everything drove and pressed toward a decision.

Convulsively bent over, leaning back in the chair, he saw that man whose face had no colour for which there is a name. The eyes were closed, the mouth half-open. The decayed teeth and the limp droop of the beard gave him an expression of bestiality. The sharp-fingered hands with the blue, swollen veins stirred like reptiles. The forehead was covered all over with sweat. Like drops from the cover of an overheated vessel filled with liquid, thus the sweat oozed out and stood in thick beads on that forehead.

His aspect was so frightful that Christian took his handkerchief, and with a careful gesture wiped that forehead and those temples. And as he did so he felt his own brow become moist. He hesitated to use the same cloth for himself. But at that moment Niels Heinrich opened his eyes and looked at him—sombre, deep, cold. He conquered his aversion, and wiped his own brow with the same cloth.

There came a knocking at the door. Niels Heinrich started as though a heavy blow had struck him, and stared wildly with pale and empty eyes.

Christian opened the door. It was Michael and Johanna who were returning.

Reeling, Niels Heinrich sought his cap with his eyes. Christian gave it to him with all his impenetrable courtesy of demeanour, and prepared himself to accompany Niels Hein-

rich. The latter had an expression of dullness and of being utterly puzzled. Then he pulled up his shoulders and, followed by Christian, walked first falteringly, then with increasing firmness, toward the threshold.

XXV

The interview with Wolfgang Wahnschaffe made a thoroughly unpleasant impression on Lorm. He had the vexatious feeling that this well-bred young gentleman harboured the very naïve opinion that in the presence of a mere actor he could exhibit his complete ruthlessness and brutal self-seeking. Because what did an actor matter? One need take no trouble and could magnificently show one's cards.

On that very evening Lorm felt the approaching symptoms of serious illness. He was laconic; what he said was brief and sharp.

It was proposed to him to take part in a conspiracy. The plan was to imprison Christian in a sanatorium by the unanimous decision of the family.

"I can quite imagine what you mean by a sanatorium," said Lorm, "but what do you gain by it?"

"A clear road," was the answer, "the immediate setting aside of his troublesome rights and claims as the firstborn. The shame and disgrace that he spreads pass all belief."

He explained that certain individuals, including physicians, were willing to serve as witnesses and to co-operate. Yet actual internment was an extreme measure. If it should fail or the parental consent to carry it out should be unobtainable, there was another plan which was being prepared with equal care. The ground would be dug away from under his feet; he must be brought to leave the city and, preferably, the country. It was possible to have Christian boycotted at the university, though he rarely appeared there now. Another promising plan was to prejudice against him the people of the quarter where he lived; a beginning in that direction had already been

made. But there wasn't much time; the evil was infectious, and the shameful rumours grew more troublesome daily. It would not do to wait until the murder case with its fatal publicity came to trial; he must be made to disappear before that. There would be good prospects in Judith going to him in a friendly way and persuading him with sisterly kindness to disappear and not compel his relatives to use the force which the law would readily place in their hands. If Judith failed and he refused, everything must be done to send their father on the same errand. He had written to his father; if no decisive measures were taken within a week, he would telegraph. Furthermore, friends had gone to the Privy Councillor to plead for swift action.

There Wolfgang sat, pale with rage, balked in his mean worldliness.

"So far as Judith is concerned, she's unapproachable in the matter," Lorm said coldly. "I'll speak to her once more, but I fear it will be useless. I myself would consider it desirable for her to go to Christian, though my reasons are not yours; but Judith cannot be persuaded. The fate of others, even of her own brother, are mere phantoms to her. A year ago she was still capable of refusing passionately any participation in such a plan; to-day she has probably simply forgotten Christian. She plays and dreams her life away. I am sorry that I do not know Christian myself. But people have come to seek me out for so many years that I have lost the impulse and ability to go to them. I must resign myself to that, though it is an evil, no doubt."

Wolfgang was surprised at these words and grew quite icy. He asked Lorm whether Judith would receive him, Wolfgang, pleasantly. Lorm thought that she would. Therewith the interview came to an end. They shook hands with conventional indifference.

Lorm did not dare tell Judith of his meeting with Wolfgang. He was afraid of her questions, of her feeling his sympathy

with Christian, of clouding the puppet-show of her life. Yet she was gradually draining all the light out of his own existence. Her niggardliness in the household became so extreme that the servants complained of hunger. The baker and the butcher could obtain settlement of their bills only when they threatened to bring suit. Judith intercepted the dunning letters they addressed to Lorm. She sorted the mail every morning. He knew it; one of the maids, whom she had discharged after an ugly quarrel, had flung the information at him. He did not reproach Judith. She began to cut down the expenses for his personal needs too, and he had to eke out his diet in restaurants and wine-rooms. But the sums that she wasted for frocks, coats, hats, and antiquities increased to the point of madness. She bought old cases and chests which she promptly sent to the attic; Chinese vases, Renaissance embroideries, ivory boxes, cut-glass goblets, candelabra of chased metal work. Her purchases were without discrimination, and served only the whim of the moment. The things stood or lay about as in a shop; they served neither use nor adornment. Now and then she had a generous impulse, and presented some object to one of the women who flattered her and whose society had therefore become indispensable to her. Afterwards she would regret her generosity, and abuse its recipient as though a trick had been played on her. In spite of the great number of things about her, she would observe the absence or displacement of any object at once, accuse every one who had entered the room of theft, and know no rest until the lost thing had been found. In her dressing-room there hung dozens of garments and hats and shawls that had never touched her body except when she had tried them on on the day of their purchase. It satisfied her to possess them. They might go out of fashion or be full of moths; to possess them was enough.

Lorm knew this, but he bore her no resentment. He made no objection; he let her do as she desired. He did not or would not see the obvious consequences of his boundless ac-

quiescence—her degeneration and degradation and heartlessness. She was to him still the woman who had sacrificed everything in order to enter his lonely and joyless life. He had condemned his achingly modest soul to permanent gratitude, and had no conviction of any right of protest. He who had thrust so many from him, and had been cold toward so many, and had contemned so much genuine and active love, whose gentlest gesture had not only commanded but entranced thousands of watchers and listeners, this same man endured humiliation and neglect as though to expiate his sins, and was silent and steadfast in undeviating fidelity.

During this period his colleagues in the theatre trembled at his outbursts of irritability; even Emanuel Herbst's philosophical calm had little power over him. He went to fill engagements in Breslau, Leipzig, and Stuttgart. He impressed people more profoundly than any actor had done for decades. One felt in him the turning-point of an epoch and the ultimate perfect moment of an artist. The public, wrought upon by his spirit to the height of rare perceptions, had a presentiment of the finality of his appearances, and was shaken in the passion of its applause as by the tragic, scarlet glow of a sunset that betokens doom.

He returned home, and took to his bed. After a thorough examination his physician's face grew serious. He demanded a trained nurse. Judith was at a concert; the housekeeper promised to report to her mistress. When Judith returned, she sat down at his bedside. She was astonished and pouted a little, and talked to Lorm as though he were a parrot who refuses to chatter his accustomed words. It was the housekeeper who received the trained nurse.

"Well, Puggie dear," Judith said next morning, "aren't you well yet? Shall I have them cook you a little soup? I suppose the Suabians gave you too many goodies?"

"Puggie" smiled, reached for his wife's hand, and kissed it.

Judith withdrew her hand in terror. "Oh, you wicked boy," she cried, "you mustn't do that! Do you want to infect your sweetheart? Think of it! Puggie mustn't do that till we know what ails him and that it isn't dangerous. Understand that?"

Letitia had announced her visit for that afternoon. She came, accompanied by Crammon. Judith's cordial reception was largely the result of consuming curiosity. The two women, who had not seen each other since their girlhood, regarded each other. Where have you been stranded? And you? Thus their eyes asked, while their lips flowed with flattery. Crammon seemed to curdle of his own sourness.

Fifteen minutes later the maid appeared and announced that Count Rochlitz's chauffeur was at the door. The count was waiting in the car. "Ask him to come up," Letitia commanded. "You don't mind, do you?" She turned to Judith. "An old friend of mine."

The count obeyed and came up. He was charming and told racing anecdotes.

At the end of another fifteen minutes came the Countess Brainitz with Ottomar and Reinhold. It had been agreed that they were to call for Letitia. They all filled Judith's drawing-room, and there was a hubbub of talk.

Crammon said to Ottomar, whom his condescension at times permitted to learn his opinions and feelings: "Once when I was in Tunis I was awakened by violent voices in the morning. I thought the native population had risen in revolt and rushed from my bed. But there were only two elderly, dark-brown ladies carrying on a friendly conversation under my window. It is characteristic of women to produce a maximum of din with a minimum of motive. They are constantly saving the Capitol. I am inclined to believe that the Romans, a nation of braggarts and sabre-rattlers, infused a rather ungallant implication into the pleasant fable of the geese. Usually their judgment of female nature was blithely

sophomoric. As proof I adduce the story of Tarquin and Lucretia. Monstrous nonsense, penny-dreadful stuff! In my parental house we had a calendar on which the story was related in verse and bodied forth in pictures. This cataract of chastity gave me an utterly perverse notion of certain fundamental facts of human nature. It took years to penetrate the character of the deception."

Ottomar said: "I grant you what you say of all women except of Letitia. Observe how she moves, how she carries her head. She is an exquisite exception. Her presence makes every occasion festive; she is the symbol of lovely moments. She will never age, and all her actions are actions in a dream. They have no consequences, they have no objective reality, and she expects them to have neither."

"Very deep and very finely observed," said Crammon, with a sigh. "But heaven guard you from trying to establish a practical household with such a fairy creature."

"One shouldn't, one mustn't," the young man replied, with conviction.

Crammon arose, and went over to Judith. "Isn't Edgar at home, Frau Lorm?" he asked. "Can one get to him? We have not seen each other for long."

"Edgar is ill," Judith answered, with a frown, as though she had reason to feel affronted by the fact.

A silence fell on the room. All felt a sense of discomfort. And Crammon saw, as in a new and sudden vision, Judith's projecting cheek-bones, her skin injured by cosmetics, her morbidly compressed mouth with its lines of bitterness, her fluttering glance, and her restless hands. There was something of decay in her and about her, something that came of over-intensity and the fever of gambling, of a slackening and rotting of tissues. Her cheerfulness arose from rancour, her vivacity was that of a marionette with creaking joints.

Letitia had forgotten to mention Christian. Not until they reached the street did she recall the purpose of her visit. She

reproached Crammon for not having reminded her. "It doesn't matter," Crammon said. "I'm going back to-morrow and you can come with me. I want to see Lorm. I have a presentiment of evil; misfortune is brewing."

"O Bernard," Letitia said, plaintively, "you croak enough to make the sun lose its brightness and roses their fragrance."

"No. Only I happen to know that a change is coming over the face of the earth; and you poor, lost souls do not see it," answered Crammon, with forefinger admonishingly raised.

And he departed and went to Borchardt, where he intended to dine exquisitely. Each time he dined there, he called it the murderer's last meal.

XXVI

When Michael left the church at Johanna's side he felt profoundly stirred by the experience of the past hour.

They rode as far as Schönhauser Avenue, and from there on they went on foot. The flurries of snow and the drifts on the ground made walking doubly difficult for the limping boy.

During their long ride he had been silent, although his face showed the pathetic eagerness of his thoughts and feelings. He had but recently learned to express himself; formerly he had had to choke everything down. And since he had learned to speak out he seized every opportunity. His words were fresh, and his gestures expressive and extreme. His tone belied his youth. With shrill accents he deadened attacks of timidity. Afraid of not being taken as seriously as seemed to befit him and his confusions and insights and experiences, he would often defend daring assertions stubbornly, while his own conviction of their truth was already wavering. On the way out he had repeatedly begun to talk of Christian. His soul was filled by Christian. His worship, half timid, half full of wild enthusiasm, expressed itself in various ways. His mind had lacked an ideal and the spiritual centres and intoxications of youth;

now he gave himself up to these the more gladly. Yet, in conformity to his brooding nature, he tricked out Christian's simpleness in various mysteries and problems, and on this point Johanna could not set him right. She evaded his remarks. The boy seemed to her too impetuous, too absolute, too eager. He affronted the modesty of her feelings; he was too fond of rending veils. Yet he fascinated her, and kept her in a state of restlessness and gentle pain; and she needed both. She could fancy that she was protecting him, and through this duty she was better protected against herself.

He said it hadn't been the music that had overwhelmed him. Music of that kind was an expression through difficult forms, and one should not, it seemed to him, let pleasure in the sounds deceive one in regard to one's ignorance. One must know and learn.

"What was it then? What did impress you?" Johanna asked. But her question showed only a superficial curiosity. The way and the day had wearied her beyond the desire of speech.

"It was the church," said Michael. "It was the song in praise of Christ. It was the devout multitude." He stopped, and his head fell. In his childhood and until quite recently, he told her in his hoarse and slightly broken boyish voice, he had not been able to think of Jesus Christ without hatred. A religiously brought up Jewish child out in the country, who had suffered the jeers and abuse of Gentiles, felt that hatred in his very bones. To such a child Christ was the enemy who had deserted and traduced his people, the renegade and source of all that people's suffering. "I remember how I used to slink past all churches," Michael said; "I remember with what fear and rage. Ruth never felt so. Ruth had no sense for the reality of bitter things; to her everything was sweet and clear. She left the vulgar far below her. It ate into me, and I had no one to talk to."

But one evening, a few days before her disappearance, Ruth without his asking her and without any preliminary speech, but simply as though she wanted to get closer to him and release him from his oppressed state, had read him a passage from the Gospel of the Christians. It was the passage in which the risen Lord asks Peter: "Lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He said unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? Peter was grieved that he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep." And later on he said: "Follow me."

He told how he had torn the book from his sister's hand and had turned its pages and had not desired to be led astray by it. But one sentence had held his attention, and he had dwelt upon it. It was this: "And he needed not to have knowledge of a man, for he knew what was in man." At that the hatred of Christ had vanished from his soul. Yet he had not been able to believe in him or to turn to him. He didn't mean in the way of piety and prayer; he meant the idea which gave men assurance and help to their minds. He had grasped that to-day, during the soaring song, and as he watched the thousand eyes that seemed first extinguished and then lit by a solemn flame. "Lovest thou me, Simon?" He had grasped that utterly, and also the saying: "Follow me." And his consciousness of being a Jew and having been cast out had been transformed from pain and shame into wealth and pride through the assurance of a certain service and a peculiar power. "It was wonderful, wonderful," he assured her. "I don't quite understand it yet. I am like a lamp that has been lit."

Johanna was frightened at the outburst of a passion so strange and incomprehensible to her.

"Feed my sheep," Michael almost sang the words out into the snow. "Feed my sheep."

"It is an awakening," Johanna thought, with faint horror and envy. "He has been awakened."

The boy's impassioned attachment to Christian became ever clearer to her. When they waited at the locked door in Stolpische Street and Christian came out with Niels Heinrich and passed the two without noticing them, without glance or greeting, and went off with that shaking, shuffling, distorted creature, Michael limped behind him for a few paces, stared into the dark yard filled with the whirl of snow, and then returned to Johanna and said beseechingly: "He mustn't go with that man. Do run after him and call him back. He mustn't, for God's sake, go with him."

Johanna, although she was herself perturbed, soothed the overwrought boy. She remained for half an hour, forced herself to a natural cheerfulness, chatted pleasantly as she made tea and laid the cloth for a cold supper. Then she went home. At eight o'clock the next morning Michael rang the bell at her dwelling. She had scarcely finished dressing. She met him in the hall. He was pale, sleepless, struggling for words. "Wahnschaffe hasn't come home yet," he murmured. "What shall we do?"

Fighting down her first consternation, Johanna smiled. She took Michael's hand and said: "Don't be afraid. Nothing will happen to him."

"Are you so sure of that?"

"Quite sure!"

"Why are you?"

"I don't know. But it would never occur to me to be afraid for him. That would be a sheer waste of emotional energy."

Her calm and assurance impressed Michael; yet he asked her to come with him and stay with him if she could. After

a moment's reflection she consented. On the way back they entered a bookshop and bought the volumes that Lamprecht had suggested. Christian had given Michael money for the purchase. He wanted to begin his studies alone and at once, but he could not collect his thoughts. He sat at the table, turned the leaves of books, arranged paper, lifted his head and listened, pressed his hands together or jumped up and walked to and fro in the room, looked out into the yard, gazed searchingly at Johanna, who was working at a piece of embroidery and sat shivering and worn in a corner of the sofa, gnawing at her lip with her small white teeth.

Thus that day passed and another night, and yet Christian did not return. The impatience and anxiety of the boy became unrestrainable. "We must bestir ourselves," he said. "It is stupid to sit here and wait." Johanna, who was also beginning to grow anxious, prepared to go either to Botho von Thüngen or to Dr. Voltolini. While she was putting on her hat Lamprecht came in. When he had been told of the situation he said: "You're doing Wahnschaffe no favour by raising an alarm. If he doesn't come, it is for reasons of his own. Your fear is childish and unworthy of him. We'd better start at something useful, my boy."

His firmer intellect shared in an even higher degree Johanna's instinctive assurance. Michael submitted once more, and for two hours he was an obedient pupil. Toward noon, when Johanna and Lamprecht had left, a teamster presented himself with an unpaid bill. He said he hadn't received payment yet for the horses furnished for the funeral of the late Fräulein Engelschall. Michael assured the man that he would receive his money on the morrow, since Wahnschaffe had of course merely forgotten the matter. The man grumbled and went out; but in the yard he was joined by several other people, and Michael heard the sound of hostile talk and of Christian's name. He went into the hall and to the outer door. The venomous words and references in the vilest jargon drove the

blood into his cheeks. He felt at once that the feeling against Christian had been deliberately instigated by some one. A red-haired fellow, a painter who lived on the fourth floor, was especially scurrilous. He called the attention of the others to Michael; a coarse remark was made; the crowd roared. When the courage of his indignation drove Michael out into the yard, he was met by menacing glances.

"What have you to say against Wahnschaffe?" he asked in a loud voice, yet with an instinctive shrinking of his body.

Again they roared. Laughing, the red-haired fellow turned up his sleeves. A woman at a window above reached into the room and poured a pailful of dirty water into the yard. The water spattered Michael, and there was thunderous laughter. The teamster Scholz put his hands to his hips, and discoursed of idlers who set fleas into the ears of the working-people with dam' fool talk and hypocrisy. And suddenly other words hissed into Michael's face: "Get out o' here, Jew!" He became pale, and touched the wall behind him with his hands.

At that moment Botho von Thüngen and Johanna came in through the doorway. They stopped and silently regarded the group of people in the snow and also Michael. They understood. Johanna drew Michael into the house. He gave a breathless report; he was so ardent, so nobly indignant, that his features took on a kind of beauty.

After a while someone knocked at the door, and Amadeus Voss entered. His courtesy was exaggerated, but he seemed in no wise astonished to find Johanna here, nor did it seem to annoy him. He said he wanted to talk to Christian Wahnschaffe. Thüngen replied that no one knew when Christian would return or whether he would return on that day at all.

Voss said drily that he had time and could wait.

Johanna felt paralysed. She could not will to go away. All she wanted to avoid was any demonstration, any scene. Like an animal that slinks to a hiding-place, she cowered in

the corner of the sofa, and gnawed her lip with her little teeth.

Suddenly the thought flashed into her mind—"death, death, that's the only thing."

XXVII

The festivities were over; the guests had departed; Eva and Susan remained alone in the castle.

The fullness of spring had come thus early to that southern coast. The festivals had been festivals of spring amid a tropical wealth of flowers and in that heroic landscape. The flight from the winter of the North had been so swift that no dignity could withstand its effects. It had intoxicated every soul. They had given themselves up to the mere delight of breathing, to the astonishment of the senses. Some had felt like carousers and gluttons merely, others like liberated prisoners, and all had been conscious of the brevity of their respite; and this consciousness breathed a breath of melancholy over all delight.

The atmosphere still echoed the thrill of impassioned words and the tread and laughter of women; the sounds had not yet quite died away, and in the night the darkness of the silent park still yearned for the glow of lights which the stars above could not cause it to forget.

But they were all gone.

The Grand Duke had accepted the invitation of an Austrian Archduke to shoot on his estates. In April Eva was to meet him in Vienna and accompany him to Florence. She had asked none of her friends to stay longer, no woman, no artist, and no paladin. It had become a very hunger of her soul to be alone once more. She had not been alone for four years.

She felt even Susan to be in the way. When the woman crept about her in foolish anxiety, she sent her out of the room. She desired not to be addressed nor to be beheld; she wanted to escape into a crystalline structure of loneliness. She had

built it, and wanted the full experience of it; and suddenly she became aware of the fact that it estranged her from herself. Something had happened to make the blood of her heart cool and sick.

She could not read nor write letters nor consider plans. No hour seemed to grow out of another living hour. All day she walked alone by the sea or sat amid flowers in the garden. The greater part of the night she lay on an open terrace, in front of which the sky hung down like a curtain of dark-blue velvet. Often the dawn had arisen before she went to bed. She had a sensation within herself as of loosened organization and rhythms dissolved. At times she felt a sting of dread. Noon glowed on her like steel; evening was a gate into the unknown.

She had forbidden all messages. Letters that laid claim to any urgency were answered by Susan or Monsieur Labourdemont. Yet casting a chance and inattentive look at the letter of a friend she saw something about Ivan Becker. What she read took possession of her mind. It was like a presage and a touch of danger. When she lay at night on her terrace, there was a pallid flashing behind the azure curtain of the sky, and the silence breathed treachery.

At the head of fifteen thousand workingmen, all loyal to the Tsar, Ivan Becker had appeared in front of the Winter Palace, in order to effect a direct explanation and reconciliation between the Tsar and his people. Regiments of Cossacks had surrounded the peaceful demonstration, and it had ended in a shambles. Again the people had gathered, and Ivan Becker on a tribunal had stretched out his arms to heaven and cursed the Tsar. He was a fugitive in the land, hiding in monasteries and in peasants' huts. Next the mutineers of the "Panteleymon" and the "Potemkin" sent him a message, bidding him join them. The crews of the two dreadnoughts had refused obedience to their officers in the harbour of Sebastopol. They had murdered their captains and other officers, and cast their bodies into the sea or into the ships' fires. They

had taken possession of the ships, elected their own officers, and had steamed out to sea. It was not known whether Ivan Becker had followed the summons of the mutineers; all trace of him had been lost. But many people asserted with assurance that he had sought security from the pursuit of the political police on board of the rebellious ships, and had acquired a remarkable influence over the savage seamen.

It was his third appearance in the midst of revolt and blood.

Rumours were brought and spread by gardeners, fishermen, and peasants. It was said that the mutineers had turned pirates, that they captured merchantmen and bombarded cities. During many nights rockets flared up in the sky, and the thunder of artillery was heard. Wherever they needed not to fear the attack of superior forces, it was said, they landed and looted towns and villages, killed all who resisted, and filled the province far inland with terror.

Eva was warned. She was warned by the elder of a village that lay on the confines of her park; she was warned by messengers sent by the naval commander at Nicolayev, who informed her that the mutinous sailors planned to attack all imperial estates in the Crimea, especially those of the Grand Duke; she was finally warned by an anonymous telegram from Moscow.

She did not heed these warnings. She had a feeling that she should not and must not fear this thing of all others—not this menace of degradation and ugliness. So she remained; but her stay was one long waiting. A conviction of a thing ineluctable had come over her. It proceeded not from the mutineers or their reign of crime, but from her own mind and from the profound logic of things.

One evening she mounted the golden stairs to the tower. Gazing from the platform across the dark tree-tops and over land and sea, she saw along the northern horizon a seam of scarlet. Wrapped in a filmy veil, she thoughtfully watched the

spreading of that glow without anxiety or curiosity as to its cause. She had a penetrant feeling of the presence of fate, and bowed to it in fatalistic resignation.

Susan was waiting in the room with the Arabic frescoes. Walking up and down with the stride of a dervish, she fought against her darkening fears. The flame was burning low. How was it with Lucas Anselmo? Her deep awareness of him, her sense of living for him, had not grown feebler during these years of radiance and fulfilment. The dancer who was his work, into whom he had breathed the breath of life and art, had been to her, now as before, the assurance of his being and the message of his soul. And what was happening now? Darkness was creeping on; the shadow-creature of his making drooped in its lovely motions. Was the hand that had formed and commanded it stricken and cold? Had that lofty spirit grown weary, and lost the strength to project itself afar? Had the end come?

Eva entered. She was startled by Susan's appearance, and sat down on a couch, at whose head stood glowing hortensias that were renewed each morning. The sea wind had chilled her. The eyes in their carven hollows were stern. "What do you want?" she asked.

"I think we ought to leave," Susan answered. "It is foolish to delay. The small military escort that is on the way from Yalta could not protect us if the castle were to be attacked."

"What are you afraid of?" Eva asked again. "Of men?"

"Yes, I am afraid of men; and it is a very reasonable fear. Use your imagination, and think of their bodies and voices. We ought to leave."

"It is foolish to be afraid of men," Eva insisted, leaning her arm on the pillows and her head upon her hand.

Susan said: "But you too are afraid. Or what is it? What is happening to you? Is it fear? What are you afraid of?"

"Afraid . . . yes; I am afraid," Eva murmured. "Of what? I don't know. Of shadows and dreams. Some-

thing has gone from me; my guardian deity has fled. That makes me afraid."

Susan trembled at these confirmatory words. "Shall we order our boxes packed?" she asked humbly.

Overhearing her question Eva continued: "Fear grows from guilt. Look you, I wander about here, and am guilty. I open my garment because it binds me, and feel my guilt. I stretch out my hand after one of those blue blossoms, and know my guilt. I think and think, and brood and brood, and cannot fathom the reason. The innermost, ultimate reason—I cannot find it."

"Guilt?" Susan stammered in her consternation. "Guilty? You? Child, what are you saying? You are ill! Dearest, sweetest, you are ill!" She kneeled at Eva's feet, embraced her delicate body, and looked up at her with swimming eyes. "Let us flee, dear heart, let us flee to our friends. I knew this land would kill you. Yesterday's wilderness which your enchantment transformed into an unreal paradise still guards the old malevolence of its remote and accursed earth. Arise and smile, dear one. I shall sit down at the piano and play Schumann, whom you love. I shall bring you a mirror, that you may behold yourself and see how beautiful you still are. Who that is so beautiful can be guilty?"

Sadly Eva shook her head. "Beauty?" she asked. "Beauty? You would cheat me of my deep perceptions with your talk of beauty. I know nothing of beauty. If it be indeed a real thing, it is without blessing. No, do not speak of beauty. I have reached out after too much in too short a time, robbed too much, used too much, wasted too much—men and souls and given pledges. I could not hold it all nor bear it. All my wishes were fulfilled. The more measureless they became, the swifter was the fulfilment. I had fame and love and wealth and power, the service of slaves and adoration—everything, everything! So much that I could burrow in it as in a heap of precious stones. I desired to

rise—from what depths you know, and wings were given me. I desired to break obstacles; they melted at my glance. I wanted to devote myself to a great cause, and its servants had faith in me before I had begun to master its meaning. They proclaimed it in my name while I still needed to be taught it. All things came too soon and too fully. Millions sacrifice what is dearest to them, tremblingly and devoutly, not to be swept away from the cliff to which they are clinging; I was like Aladdin, to whom the genii bow the knee before his command is uttered. And I thrust from me and misprized the only one whose heart ever resisted me—though he himself knew not why. Every step has been a step toward guilt, every yearning has been guilt, and every stirring of gratitude. Every hour of delight has been guilt, every enjoyment an impoverishment, and every rise a fall."

"Blasphemer," Susan murmured. "Pride and satiety cause you to sin against yourself and your fate."

"How you torment me," Eva answered. "How all of you torment me—men and women. How sterile I become through you. How your voices torture me, and your eyes and words and thoughts. You lie so frivolously; you would not listen, and truth is hateful to you. Who are you? Who are you, Susan? You have a name; but I do not know you. You are another self; and you torment me out of that other selfhood. Go! Have I asked you to be with me? I want to enter my own soul, and you would keep me without? I tell you I shall stay, though they burn the house down over my head."

She spoke these words with a repressed passionateness, and arose. She withdrew herself from her sobbing companion and entered her bedchamber.

An hour later Susan burst in, pale and with dishevelled hair. She called out to her mistress, who was still awake and meditating by the light of a shaded lamp: "They are upon us. They are approaching the castle! Labourdemont

has telephoned to Yalta. We are advised to flee at once. During the past fifteen minutes the wires have been cut. I've just left the garage; the motor will drive up in twenty minutes. Quickly, quickly, while there is still time."

Calmly Eva said: "There is no occasion for alarm or outcry; control yourself. Experience in similar cases seems to show that flight only goads the people on to plundering and destruction. If they have the temerity to enter here, I shall face their leaders and deal with them. That is the right and natural thing. I shall stay; but I shall force no one to stay with me."

Susan was quite calm at once, and her tone was dry: "You are very much in error, if you think I tremble for myself. If you stay, it goes without saying that I stay too. Let us not waste another word." And she gave her mistress the garment which a gesture had demanded.

Then were heard hurrying steps and cries, the whir of the motor, and the barking of dogs. Monsieur Labourdemont strode wildly up and down in the ante-room. The sergeant of gendarmes addressed his men from the stairs. With equanimity Eva sat down at her toilet table, and let Susan arrange her hair. The roar of the sea came through the open window. The heavy dragging noise was suddenly interrupted by the rattle of rifle fire.

A brief silence ensued. Labourdemont knocked at the door of the sleeping chamber. There wasn't another minute to be lost, he called out, with a lump of terror in his throat. "Tell him what is needful," Eva commanded. Susan went out, and returned shortly with a sombre smile on her lips. Eva's glance questioned her. "Panic," Susan said, and shrugged her shoulders. "Naturally. They don't know what to do."

Again cries were heard; they were frightened and confused. A light flickered; muffled commands followed. Loud cries burst into the silence, then the howling of hundreds. Next came a sudden crash, as though a wooden door had been

broken down. Crackling of flames swallowed the barking of the dogs, and was itself silenced by piercing cries, hisses, roars. A pillar of fire arose without; the chamber was crimson in the glow. Susan stood crimson in its midst; her eyes were glassy, and her face a rigid mask.

Eva went to the window. Trees and bushes were steeped in glow. The centre of the fire was not to be seen. The space in front of the castle was deserted. The guards had vanished; seeing the hopelessness of facing the superior forces of the mutineers, they had fled; nor was a single one of Eva's servants to be seen. Uncertain shadows rolled forward, hissing in the glow and the darkness. Shots sounded from all directions. The clash of shards resounded; they were stoning the hothouses. Suddenly from the right and from the left, surging about the house, masses of men burst out of the fiery twilight, that was momently transformed into yellow brilliancy. It was a wild throng of arms and rumps and heads, a raging mass, impetuously driving forward, whose roaring and growling and whistling shook the very air.

"Leave the window!" Susan murmured, in rough beseeching.

Eva did not stir. Faces looked up and saw her. An incomprehensible word flashed through the whirling mass. Many remained standing; but while they stared upward, they were thrust aside by others behind them. The human surge broke against the castle steps and ebbed away a little. A wavering came upon it, then a silence.

"Leave the window!" Susan begged, with uplifted hands.

Masses of scarlet-tinged faces turned toward Eva. Close-packed, they filled the semicircle in front of the castle; and still the mass increased, like a dark fluid in a vessel that is slowly filled to the brim. Those farthest behind stamped on the sward and flower-beds, uprooted bushes, hurled statues to the ground. Most of them wore the uniform of marines; but among them was also the mob of cities, human offscourings eager for booty and blood—the men of the Black Hundreds.

They were armed with rifles, sabres, clubs, revolvers, iron bars, and axes. A great number were drunk.

That incomprehensible word clanged once more above the serried heads. The whirling forward rush started again. Fists worked their way upward. A shot resounded. Susan uttered a throttled cry, as the hanging lamp over the bed fell shattered. Eva stepped back from the window. She shivered. Absent-mindedly she took a few steps, and lifted an apple from a bowl. It slipped from her hand and rolled along the floor.

They entered the house. Blows of the axe were heard, the shuffle of feet, the opening of doors. They were seeking.

"We are doomed," Susan whispered, and clung to Eva's arm with both hands, as though someone were thrusting her into water.

"Let me be," Eva repulsed her. "I shall try to speak to them. It will suffice to show them courage."

"Don't go! For God's sake, don't!" Susan besought her.

"Let me go, I tell you. I see no other way. Hide, and let me go!"

Her step was the step of a queen. Perhaps she knew the sentence that had been pronounced. Upon the threshold an icy feeling of ultimate decision came over her. Her eyes were veiled. The way seemed far to her and moved her to impatience. From the reflection of fire and the twilit greyness, men bounded toward her and receded, surrounded her and melted back. The nobility of her figure still had power over them; but behind them venomous demons raged and made a path toward her. She spoke some Russian words. The flaring whirl of heads and shoulders surged fantastically up and down. She saw necks, beards, teeth, fists, ears, eyes, foreheads, veins, nails. Features dislimned; the faces melted into a glow of flame. Fire crackled in her gymnasium; hatchets crashed against costly things; smoke filled the corridors; maniacal cries tore the air. Eva turned.

It was too late. No magic of look or gesture availed. The depths were unleashed.

She fled with the lightness of a gazelle. Loutish steps followed her, and the wheezing of loud lungs. She reached the stairs of the quadrangular tower, the structure of her whim. She ran up the stairs. High up the gilded steps sparkled in the first glint of dawn. Her hand glided without friction over the balustrade. The painted enamel, another creation of her whims, was cool and calming to her palms. Her pursuers grunted like wolves. But the light seemed to lift her upward. She burst into the silvery morning, and beheld the burning buildings swaying in the wind and the wide sea. Her pursuers surged after her like a great heap of limbs, a polypus with hair and noses and cruel teeth.

She leaped upon the parapet. Arms reached out after her. Higher! Ah, if there were a higher height! Clouds covered the sky. Once upon a time it had been different. Stars had comforted her—the lordly reaches of the firmament. The memory lasted but a second. Hands grasped her; claws were at her very breast. Four, six, eight pairs of arms were stretched out toward her. A last reflection, a last struggle, a last sigh. The air divided with a whir. She plunged. . . .

On slabs of marble lay her body. That marvellous body was a mass of bloody pulp. The broken eyes were open—empty, void of depth or knowledge or consciousness. Over the parapet the human wolves howled in their disappointed rage. Below others fell upon her dead. They tore the garments from her body, and stuck shreds of them, like flags, on poles and branches.

Slain on the threshold of her mistress' bedchamber lay Susan Rappard.

When the work of plundering and destruction had been completed, the wild horde withdrew. A man of mercy and shame had finally thrown a horse-blanket over the dancer's soiled and naked body.

As evening came, one man still wandered about amid the ruins, a lonely man in lonely travail of spirit. He wore the garb of a priest, and on his features was the stamp of a fate fulfilled. Those who came at a late hour to seek and accompany him, greeted him with reverence, for he was accounted by them a saint of the people and a prophet of the kingdom to come.

He spoke to them: "I have lied to you; I am but a weak creature like the rest."

They rocked their heads and one answered: "Little Father Ivan Michailovitch, do not destroy our hope or cease leading us in our weakness."

Thereupon this saint of his people gazed at the body that lay under a horse-blanket amid the trampled flowers and the charred ruins, and said: "Let us proceed then even unto the end."

XXVIII

Thrice on the street Niels Heinrich stopped and stared into Christian's face. Then he went on, stumping his feet against the asphalt and hunching his back. At first he dragged himself painfully along; gradually his tread grew steadier.

At Kahle's shop he asked with toneless jeer whether the gentleman was employed by the police. In that case the gentleman needn't delay or worry. He knew the way to headquarters himself.

"I did not go with you from such a motive."

"Well, what for then?" The gentleman was talking crazy again. He had a way of trying to make people drunk with talk.

"Do you live in this house?" Christian asked.

Yes, he lived there. Maybe the gentleman would like to look at the stinking hole? Right ahead then. He himself wouldn't stay upstairs long. He just wanted to fix himself up a little more neatly and then go to Gottlieb's Inn. That

was a better class café with girlies and champagne. He was going to treat to fifteen or twenty bottles to-day. Why not—since he had the brass? But first he'd have to go to Grünbusch's to pawn something. Maybe all that'd bore the gentleman; and maybe not, eh?

These words he snarled out in his rage on the dark stairs; but beneath his rage seethed a hell of terror.

The light of a street-lamp close by his window threw a pale, greenish light into the room, and saved Niels Heinrich the trouble of lighting a lamp. He pointed to it and remarked with a snicker that to have one's lighting at public expense was pure gain. He could read his paper in bed and didn't even have to blow out the lamp before going to bed. That showed you how a man had to live who wasn't without brains and might have gotten ahead in the world. It was a lousy, stinking hole. But now things would change; he was going to move to the Hotel Adlon and have a room with a private bath, and buy his linen at the Nürnberger Bazaar.

He put his hand in his pocket, and a clinking could be heard. Christian took his words for incoherent babble and did not answer.

Niels Heinrich tore off his crumpled collar, and threw his coat and waistcoat on the bed. He opened a drawer and then a wardrobe, and with astonishing dexterity put on a clean collar, so tall that it seemed to enclose his neck in a white tube, tied a cravat of yellow silk, and slipped into a striped waistcoat and a morning coat. These things looked new, and contrasted absurdly with the stained, checked trousers which, for some reason, he did not change for others. The cuffs of his shirt were also soiled.

"Well, then why?" Suddenly he asked again, and his eyes flickered rabidly in the greenish light. "Why in hell do you stick to me like a leech?"

"I need you," answered Christian, who had remained near the door.

"You need me? What for? Don't understand. Talk plain, man, talk plain! "

"It serves no purpose to talk in that manner," Christian said. "You misunderstand my being here and my . . . how shall I put it?—my interest in you. No, not interest. That's not the right word. But the word doesn't matter. You probably think it was my purpose to have you surrender to the authorities and to repeat in court the confession you have made to me. But I assure you that that does not seem important to me or, rather, important only in so far as it is desirable for the sake of Joachim Heinzen, who is innocent and whom his position and inner confusion must make very wretched. He must be in a terrible state. I have felt that constantly, and felt the pain of it especially since your confession. I can almost see him. I have a vision of him trying to climb up the stony prison wall and wounding his hands and knees. He doesn't understand; he doesn't understand how a wall can be so steep and stony; he doesn't understand what has happened to him. The world must seem sick to him at its core. You have evidently succeeded in hypnotizing him so effectively and lastingly, that under this terrible influence he has lost all control of his own actions. There is something in you that makes the exertion of such power quite credible. I am quite sure that your very name has faded from his memory. If some one went to him and whispered that name, Niels Heinrich Engelschall, into his ear, he would probably collapse as under a paralytic stroke. Of course, as I have thought it out, it is an exaggeration. But try to imagine him. One must try to grasp men and things imaginatively. Very few people do it; they cheat themselves. I see him as robbed of his very soul, as so poverty-stricken that the thought is scarcely bearable. You will reply: he is an idiot, irresponsible, with an undeveloped sensorium—more animal than human. Even science uses that argument; but it it a false argument. The premises are false and therefore

the conclusion. My opinion is that all human beings have equally deep perceptions. There is no difference in sensitiveness to pain; there is only a difference in the consciousness of that sensitiveness. There is, one may say, no difference in the method of bookkeeping, only in the accounting."

With lowered head he went a pace nearer to Niels Heinrich, who remained quite still, and continued, while a veiled smile hovered over his lips: "Don't misunderstand me. I don't desire to exert the slightest influence on your decisions. What you do or fail to do is your own affair. Whether one may desire to free that poor devil from his terrible situation, or not, is a problem of decency and humanity. So far as I am concerned, there is nothing I care about so little as to persuade you to an action which does not arise from your own conviction. I don't regard myself as a representative of public authority; it is not for me to see to it that the laws are obeyed and people informed in regard to a crime that has troubled them. What would be the use of that? Would it avail to make things better? I neither want to ensnare you nor get the better of you. Your going to court, confessing your crime, expiating in the world's sight, being punished—what have I to do with all that? Not to bring that about am I here."

Niels Heinrich felt as though his very brain were turning in his skull with a creaking noise. He grasped the edge of the table for support. In his face was a boundless astonishment. His jaw dropped; he listened open-mouthed.

"Punishment? What does that mean? And is it my office or within my power to drag you to punishment? Shall I use cunning or force to make you suffer punishment? It does not even become me to say to you: You are guilty. I do not know whether you are guilty. I know that guilt exists; but whether you are guilty or in what relation to guilt you stand—that I cannot tell. The knowledge of that is yours alone; you and you alone possess the standard by which to judge

what you have done, and not those who will be your judges. Neither do I possess it, and so I do not judge. I ask myself: Who dares to be a judge? I see no one, no one. In order that men may live together, it is perhaps necessary that judgments be passed; but the individual gains nothing by such judgments, either for his soul or for his knowledge."

It was a bottomless silence into which Niels Heinrich had sunk. He suddenly remembered the moment in which the impulse to murder the machine had come upon him. With utter clearness he saw again the steel parts with their film of oil, the swiftly whirling wheels, the whole accurately functioning structure that had, somehow, seemed hostile and destructive to him. Why that image of all others came to him now, and why he remembered his vengeful impulse with an access of shame now—he did not understand.

Christian was speaking again: "So all that does not concern me at all. You need have no fear. What I want has nothing to do with it. I want—" he stopped, hesitated, and struggled for the word, "I want you. I need you. . . ."

"Need me? Need me?" Niels Heinrich murmured, without understanding. "How? What for?"

"I can't explain it, I can't possibly explain it," said Christian.

Whereupon Niels Heinrich laughed—a toneless, broken laugh. He walked around the whole table; then he repeated that same repressed, half-mad laugh.

"You have removed a being from this earth," said Christian, softly; "you have destroyed a being so precious, so irreplaceable, that centuries, perhaps many centuries, will pass till one can arise comparable to it or like it. Don't you know that? Every living creature is like a screw in a most marvellously built machine. . . ."

Niels Heinrich began to tremble so violently that Christian noticed it. "What ails you?" he asked. "Are you ill?"

Niels Heinrich took his felt hat, that hung on a nail, and began to stroke it nervously. "Man alive," he said, "you make a fellow crazy, crazy." His tone was hollow.

"Please listen," Christian continued insistently, "—in a most marvellously built machine. Now there are important screws and less important ones; and this being was one of the most important of all. So important indeed that I am convinced that the machine is hurt forever, because it has ceased to function. No one can ever again provide a part of such delicacy and exquisite exactness, and even though a substitute be found, the machine will never be what it once was. But aside from the machine and my comparison, you have inflicted a loss on me for which there are no words. Pain, grief, sadness—these words do not reach far or deep enough. You have robbed me of something utterly precious, forever irreplaceable, and you must give me something in return. You must give me something in return! Do you hear that? That is why I am standing here; that is why I am following you. You must give me something in return. I don't know what. But unless you do, I shall be desperate, and become a murderer myself."

He buried his face in his hands, and burst into hoarse, wild, passionate weeping.

With quivering lips, in a small voice like a naughty child's, Niels Heinrich stammered: "Saviour above, what can I give you in return?"

Christian wept and did not answer.

XXIX

Thereupon they went from that room together, without having exchanged another word.

The pawnbroker Grünbusch had already closed his shop. Niels Heinrich sought another whom he knew to be reliable. He left Christian in the street while he slipped into a dirty

vault. He had torn one pearl from the string, just one, to serve as a sample for the present. After the old rascal who kept the shop had tested and weighed the pearl exactly, he gave Niels Heinrich fifteen hundred marks. The money was partly in bank-notes and partly in gold. He scarcely counted it. He stuffed the coins into one pocket; the notes crackled as he crushed them into another.

"Give him? What does he think I can give him?" He brooded. "Maybe he smells a rat, and suspects that I stole the pearls. Does he mean that? Does he want me to give them to him?"

When he reached the street again, and saw that Christian had waited patiently and without suspicion, he merely made a wry face; and he continued silently by the other's side. Dumbfounded, he bore the heavy weight of Christian's continued presence; he could not imagine what would come of it.

But the man's weeping was still in his ears and in his limbs. A cold, clear stillness filled the air of night, yet everywhere rustled the sound of that weeping. The streets through which they passed were nearly empty, yet in them was that weeping embodied in the whitish mist. In the walls and balconies of the houses to the right and to the left, it lifted up its treacherous voice—this weeping of a man.

He dared not think. Beside him went one who knew his thoughts. A rope was about him, and he could move only so far as that other permitted. Who is he? The question went through and through him. He tried to remember his name, but the name had slipped from his mind. And all that this man, this suddenly nameless man, had said to him, whirled up within him like sparks of fire.

They had reached their goal at the end of half an hour. Gottlieb's Inn was a drinking place for workingmen and small shopkeepers. It contained quite a number of rooms. First one entered the restaurant proper, which was filled with guests all night. Its chief attraction consisted in a dozen pretty

waitresses, as well as twenty to thirty other ladies, who smiled and smoked and lounged in their provocative costumes on the green plush sofas, waiting for victims. Adjoining the restaurant there were a number of cell-like private dining-rooms for couples. Beyond these was a longish, narrow hall, which was rented out for parties or to clubs, or in which gambling took place. The decoration of the rooms corresponded to the quarter and its taste. Everything was gilt; everywhere were pretentious sculptures of stucco. There were tall pillars that were hollow and supported nothing, but blocked one's path. The walls were covered with paintings that had been the latest thing the day before yesterday. Everything was new, and everything was dirty and touched with decay.

Niels Heinrich went in through the swinging door, looked about dazzled by the light, lurched past the tables, went into the passage that led to the little private rooms, came back, stared into the painted faces of the girls, called the head-waiter, and said he wanted to go into the long hall at the rear, wanted the hall for the whole evening, in fact, no matter what it cost. Twenty quarts of Mumm's Extra Dry were to be put on ice. He drew forth three one hundred mark bank-notes, and tossed them contemptuously to the head-waiter. That cleared the situation. The functionary in question had a mien at once official and ingratiating. Two minutes later the hall was festively lit.

The women appeared, and young men who were parasites by trade, corrupt boys who looked like consumptive lackeys, clerks out of a berth in loud, checked clothes—doubtful lives with a dark past and a darker future. At Gottlieb's Inn there was never any lack of such. Cordially they insisted on their long friendship for the giver of the feast. He remembered not one, but turned no one away.

He sat at the centre of the long table. He had pushed his hat far back on his head and crossed his legs and gritted his teeth. His face was as white as the cloth on the table. Im-

pudent songs were sung; they crowed and cried and screeched and giggled and joked and guzzled and wallowed and smacked each other; foul stories were told and boastful experiences; they mounted on chairs and smashed glasses. In half an hour the bacchanal destroyed all sobriety and reserve. It wasn't often that a man dropped in, as from the clouds, fairly dripping with money.

Niels Heinrich presided icily. From time to time he called out his commands: "Six bottles! A chocolate cake! Nine bottles Veuve Cliquot! A tray of pastry!" The commands were swiftly obeyed, and the company yelled and cheered. A black-haired woman put an arm about his shoulder. Brutally he thrust her back, but she made no complaint. A fat woman, excessively rouged and décolletée, held a goblet to his lips. Rancorously he spat into it, and the applause rattled about him.

He did not drink. On the wall immediately opposite him was a gigantic mirror. In it he saw the table and the roisterers. He also saw the red drapery that covered the wall behind him. He also saw several little tables that stood against the drapery. They were unoccupied, save that Christian sat at one. So through the mirror Niels Heinrich gazed across and shyly observed that alienated guest, whose silent presence had at first been noticed, but had now been long forgotten.

At Niels Heinrich's left four men played at cards. They attracted a public and sympathizers. From time to time Niels Heinrich threw a couple of gold pieces on the table. He lost every stake; but always at the same moment he threw down more gold.

He looked into the mirror and saw himself—colourless, lean, withered.

He threw down a hundred mark note. "Small stakes, big winnings!" he boasted. A few of the spectators got between him and the mirror. "Out of the way!" he roared. "I want to see that!" Obediently they slunk aside.

He looked into the mirror and beheld Christian, who sat there straight and slender, stirless and tense.

He threw down two more bank notes. "They'll bring back others," he murmured.

And when he looked into the mirror again, he saw a vision in it. It was a human trunk, a virginal body, radiant with an earthly and also with another, with an immortal purity. The scarcely curving breasts with their rosy blossoms had a sweet loveliness of form that filled him with dread and with pain. It was only the trunk: there was no head; there were no limbs. Where the neck ended there was a ring of curdled blood; the dark triangle revealed its mystery below.

Niels Heinrich got up. The chair behind him clattered to the floor. All were silent. "Out with you!" he roared. "Out! Out!" With swinging arms he indicated the door.

The company rose frightened. A few lingered; others thronged toward the door. Beside himself, Niels Heinrich grasped the chair, lifted it far above his head, and stormed toward the loiterers. They scattered; the women screamed and the men growled. Only the gamblers had remained seated, as if the whole incident did not concern them. Niels Heinrich swept with his hand across the tablecloth, and the cards flew in all directions. The gamblers jumped up, determined to resist; but at the sight of their adversary they backed away from him, and one by one strolled from the hall. Immediately thereafter the head-waiter, with a look of well-bred astonishment, came in and presented his bill. Niels Heinrich had sat down on the edge of the table with his back toward the mirror. A thin foam clung to his lips.

He paid the reckoning. The amount of his tip assuaged the deprecation and surprise of the head-waiter. He asked whether the gentleman had any further commands. Niels Heinrich answered that he wanted to drink alone now. He ordered a bottle of the best and some caviare. One of the doll-like waitresses hastened in with the bottle and opened it.

Niels Heinrich emptied a glassful greedily. At the food he shuddered. He ordered the superfluous lights to be turned out; he didn't need so much light. All but a few of the incandescent lamps were darkened, and the hall grew dim. The door was to be closed, he commanded further, and no one was to enter unless he rang. Again he threw gold on the table. He was obeyed in everything.

Suddenly it grew still.

Niels Heinrich still sat on the edge of the table.

Christian said: "That took a long time."

XXX

Niels Heinrich slid from the edge of the table, and began to pace up and down the entire length of the hall. Christian's eyes followed him uninterruptedly.

He had once read in a book, Niels Heinrich said, the story of a French count, who had killed an innocent peasant girl, and had cut the heart out of her breast and cooked and eaten it. And that had given him the power of becoming invisible. Did Christian believe that there was any truth to that story?

Christian answered that he did not.

He, for his part, didn't believe it either, Niels Heinrich said. But it was not to be denied that there was a certain magic in the innocence of virgins. Perhaps they had hidden powers which they communicated to one. It seemed to him this way, that in the guilty there was an instinct that drew them to the guiltless. The thought, then, that underlay the story would be, wouldn't it, that virginity did communicate some hidden powers? Was the gentleman prepared to deny that?

Christian, whose whole attention was given to these questions, answered that he did not deny it.

But the gentleman had asserted that there were none who are guilty? How did these things go together? If there were none who are guilty, then none are guiltless either.

"It is not to be understood in that fashion," Christian answered, conscious of the difficulty, and conscious in every nerve of the strangeness of the place, the hour, and the circumstances. "Guilt and guiltlessness do not sustain the relation of effect and cause. One is not derived from the other. Guilt cannot become innocence nor innocence guilt. Light is light and darkness is darkness, but neither can be transformed into the other, neither can be created by the other. Light issues from some body—fire or the sun or a constellation. Whence does darkness issue? It exists. It has no source; none other than the absence of light."

Niels Heinrich seemed to reflect. Still walking up and down, he flung his words into the air. Every one was made a fool of—every one from his childhood on. There had always been palavering about sin and wrong, and everything had been aimed at giving one an evil conscience. If once you had an evil conscience, no confession or penitence, no parson and no absolution did you any good. And at bottom one was but a wretched creature—a doomed creature, and condemned to damnation from the start. That had convinced him, what the gentleman had said—without looking at Christian, he stretched out his arm and index-finger toward him—oh, that had convinced him, that no one had the right to judge another. That was true. He hadn't ever seen anyone either to whom one could say: you shall pass judgment. Every one bore the mark of shame and of theft and of blood, and was condemned to the same damnation from the beginning. But if there was to be no more judging, that meant the end of bourgeois society and the capitalistic order. For that was founded on courts and on the necessity of finding men to assume its guilt, and judges who were ignorant of mercy.

Christian said: "Won't you stop walking up and down? Won't you come and sit by me? Come here; sit by me."

No, he said, he didn't want to sit by him. He wanted all these matters explained just once. He didn't want to be sub-

missive with his mind like a boy at school. The gentleman was incomprehensible, and was making a fool of him with phrases. Let him give to him, Niels Heinrich, something certain, something by which he could be guided.

"What do you mean by that—something certain?" Christian asked, deeply moved. "I am a man like yourself; I know no more than yourself; like yourself I have sinned and am helpless and puzzled. What is it I shall give you—I?"

"But I?" Niels Heinrich was beside himself. "What shall I give? And you wanted me to give you something! What is it? What can I give you?"

"Don't you feel it?" Christian asked. "Don't you know it yet—not yet?"

Silently they looked into each other's eyes, for Niels Heinrich had stopped walking. A shiver, an almost visible shiver ran down his limbs. His face seemed as though singed by the desire of one who rattles at an iron gate and would be free.

"Listen," he said, suddenly, with a desperate and convulsive calmness, "I stole those pearls in your house. I simply put them into my pocket. One of them I pawned, and made those swine drunk with the money. You can have them back if you want them. Those I can give you. If that's what you want, I can give it to you."

Christian seemed surprised; but the passionate tensity of his face did not relax at all.

Niels Heinrich put his hand into his trousers pocket. The string had been broken, so that his hand was full of the loose pearls. He held it out toward Christian; but Christian did not stir, and made no move to receive the pearls. This seemed to embitter Niels Heinrich strangely. He stretched out his hand until it was flat, and let the pearls roll on the floor. White and shimmering, they rolled on the parquetry. And as Christian still did not stir, Niels Heinrich's rage seemed to increase. He turned his pocket inside out, so that all the rest of the pearls fell on the floor.

"Why do you do that?" Christian asked, more in astonishment than in blame.

"Well, maybe the gentleman wanted a little exercise," was the impudent answer. And again that thin foam, like the white of an egg, clung to his lips.

Christian lowered his eyes. Then this thing happened: he arose and drew a deep breath, smiled, leaned over, dropped on his knees, and began to gather up the pearls. He picked up each one singly, so as not to soil his hands unnecessarily; on his knees he slid over the floor, picking up pearl after pearl. He reached under the table and under the stairs, where spilt wine lay in little puddles, and out of these nauseating little puddles he scratched the pearls. With his right hand he gathered them; and always, when his left hand was half full, he slipped its contents into his pocket.

Niels Heinrich looked down at him. Then his eyes fled from that sight, wandered through the room, found the mirror and fled from it, sought it anew and fled again. For the mirror had become a glow to him. He no longer saw his image in it; the mirror had ceased to reflect images. And again he looked toward the floor where Christian crept, and something monstrous happened in his soul. A stertorous moan issued from his breast. Christian stopped in his occupation, and looked up at him.

He saw and understood. At last! At last! A trembling hand moved forward to meet his own. He took it; it had no life. He had never yet so deeply grasped it all—the body, the spirit, time, eternity. The hand had no warmth: it was the hand of the deed, the hand of crime, the hand of guilt. But when he touched it, for the first time, it began to live and grow warm; a glow streamed into it—glow of the mirror, of service, of insight, of renewal.

It was that touch, that touch alone.

Niels Heinrich, drawn forward, sank upon his knees. In this matter of Joachim Heinzen, he stammered in a barely

audible voice, why, one might discuss it, you know. His eyes seemed broken and his features extinguished. And they kneeled—each before the other.

Saved and freed from himself by that touch, the murderer cast his guilt upon the man who judged and did not condemn him.

He was free. And Christian was likewise free.

The hall had a side-exit by which one could leave the house. There they said farewell to each other. Christian knew well where Niels Heinrich was going. He himself returned to Stolpische Street, mounted the stairs to Karen's rooms, locked himself in, lay down as he was, and slept for three and thirty hours.

A vigorous ringing of the bell aroused him.

XXXI

Lorm was sick unto death. He lay in a sanatorium. An intestinal operation had been performed, and there was slight hope of his recovery.

Friends visited him. Emanuel Herbst, most faithful of them all, concealed his pain and fear beneath a changeless mask of fatalistic calm. Since the first day on which he had seen on the face of his beloved friend the first traces of fate's destructive work, the shadow-world of the theatre with all its activities had nauseated him. With the dying of its central fire, he had a presentiment of the approaching end of many things.

Crammon also came often. He loved to talk to Lorm of past days, and Lorm was glad to remember and to smile. He also smiled when he was told how numerous were the inquiries after him; that telegrams came uninterruptedly from all the cities of the land, and showed how profoundly his image and character had affected the heart of the nation. He did not believe it; in his innermost soul he did not believe it. He despised men too deeply.

There was but one human being in whose love he believed. That was Judith. Unswervingly he believed in her love, though each hour might have offered proof of his delusion, each hour of the day in which he expressed the desire to see her, each hour of the night when he controlled his moans of pain not to annoy the ears of paid, strange women.

For Judith came at most for half an hour in the forenoon or for half an hour in the afternoon, tried to conceal her impatient annoyance by overtenderness and artificial eagerness, and said: "Puggie, aren't you going to be well soon?" or "Aren't you ashamed to be so lazy and lie here, while poor Judith longs for you at home?" She filled the sick-room with noise and with futile advice, scolded the nurse, showed the doctor his place, flirted with the consultant physician, chattered of a hundred trivialities—a trip to a health resort, the last cook's latest pilfering, and never lacked reasons with which to palliate the shortness of her stay.

Lorm would confirm these reasons. He had no doubt of any of them; he gave her opportunities to produce them. He was remarkably inventive in making excuses for her when he saw in others' faces astonishment or disapproval of her behaviour. He said: "Don't bother her. She is an airy creature. She has her own way of showing devotion, and her own way of feeling grief. You must not apply ordinary standards."

Crammon said to Letitia: "I didn't know that this Judith was one of those soulless creatures of porcelain. It was always my opinion that the phrases concerning the superior tenderness of the female soul—that's the official expression, isn't it?—constituted one of those myths by which men, the truly more delicate and noble organs of creation, were to be deceived into undue indulgence. But such spiritual coarseness as hers would make a cowboy blush. Go to her and try to stir her conscience. A great artist is leaving us, and his last sigh will be given to a popinjay, who bears his name as a fool might wear the robes

of a king. Let her at least appear to do her duty, else she is worthy of being stoned. One should follow the ancient Hindoo custom, and burn her on her husband's pyre. What a pity that these pleasant laws have gone out of use."

When Letitia next saw Judith she reproached her gently. Judith seemed overwhelmed by remorse. "You are quite right, dear child," she answered. "But you see I can't, I just can't bear to be around sick people. They always seem to wear a mask; they don't seem to be the same people at all; and there's such a terrible odour. They remind one of the most frightful thing in the world—of death. You'll reply, of course, that he's my husband, my own husband. That makes it all the worse. It creates a tragic conflict for me. One should rather have pity on me than accuse me of things. He hasn't the right to demand that I do violence to my nature, and as a matter of fact, he doesn't. He's far too subtle and too magnanimous. It's only other people who do. Well, what do they know about us? What do they know of our married life? What do they know of my sacrifices? What do they know of a woman's heart? And furthermore"—she went on hastily, becoming aware of Letitia's inner estrangement from her—"so many things are happening just now, so many horrid things. My father has just arrived. I haven't seen him since my marriage to Imhof. Do you know, by the way, that Imhof is dying? They say, too, that he's utterly ruined. I have been spared a great deal; but wouldn't it make you think that it is unlucky to love me? Why do you suppose that is? My life is as harmless as the playing of a little girl, and yet. . . . Why do you suppose it is?" She wrinkled her forehead and shivered. "Well, my father is here. There will be an interview—he, Wolfgang, and I. And oh, my dear, it's such a hideous affair that has to be discussed."

"It concerns Christian, doesn't it?" Letitia asked, and it was the first time that she had uttered his name in Judith's presence. She had forgotten again and again; she had aban-

doned her purpose over and over. She had felt Judith's mysterious spite and hate against her brother, and had not had the courage to face it. Always something more important and more amusing had seemed to appear on the gay stage of life. Now she repeated hesitantly: "It concerns Christian, doesn't it?"

Judith lapsed into sombre silence.

But from that hour Letitia was tormented by a secret curiosity, and this curiosity forbade forgetfulness. She had lost her way. Oh, she had lost her way long ago, and daily she stumbled farther into the pathless wild. Lost, confused, entangled,—thus did she seem to herself, and she had many minutes of a fleeting melancholy. All the things that happened in her life became too much for her, and yet all the trivialities of the day disappeared as water does in sand, leaving no form, no echo, no purpose. And in these moments of her sadness, she had the illusion of a new beginning, and yearned for a hand to lead her forth from these thickets of her life. She remembered that far night when her full heart had been rejected, and nursed the ecstatic dream that now, when it was used up and a little weary, it might find acceptance.

But she delayed and played with the vision in her mind. And then she had a dream. She dreamed that she was in the lobby of a magnificent hotel among many people; but she was clothed only in her shift, and could scarcely move for shame. No one appeared to observe this. She wanted to flee, but saw no door at all. While she looked about her in her misery, the lift suddenly came down from the upper storeys. She rushed into it and the door closed and the lift rose. But her dread did not leave her, and she had a sense of approaching disaster. Voices from without came to her: "There is some one dead—dead in the house." To stop the lift, she groped for the electric button, but she could not find it. The lift rose higher and higher, and the voices died away. Without knowing how she had come there, she stood in a long corridor along

which were the doors of many rooms. In one of the rooms lay a crucifix about two yards long; it was of bronze covered with a patina. She went in, and men moved respectfully aside. Now suddenly she was clothed in a garment of white satin. She kneeled down beside the crucifix. Someone said: "It is one o'clock, we must go to luncheon." Her heart was like a wound with compassion and yearning. She pressed her lips against the forehead of the image of Christ. The metal body stirred and grew and grew, and assumed the stature of life; and she, more and more tenderly giving herself, infused blood into the image, and gave its skin the colour of life, so that even the wounds of the nails flushed red. Her feeling rose to an ardent pitch of gratitude and adoration. She encircled the body and the feet of the rising Christ, who lifted her as he rose. But one of the gentlemen said: "The gong is sounding for the last call to table." And at that she awoke.

Next morning she went to Crammon, and persuaded him to drive with her to Stolpische Street.

XXXII

When Christian opened the door, his father stood before him. It was he who had rung the bell.

The emotion which this unexpected sight aroused in him was so restrained in its expression that the Privy Councillor's eyes lost their brief brightness and grew dark again.

"May one enter?" he asked, and crossed the threshold.

He walked to the middle of the room, placed his hat on the table, and looked about him with astonishment held in check. It was better than he had imagined and also worse. It was cleaner, more respectable, more habitable; it was also more lonely and desolate. "So this is where you live," he said.

"Yes, this is where I live," Christian repeated, with some embarrassment. "Here and in a room across the court I have lived until now. These were Karen's rooms."

"Why do you say until now? Are you planning to move again?"

Since Christian hesitated to answer, the Privy Councillor, not without embarrassment in his turn, went on: "You must forgive me for coming upon you so suddenly. I could not know whether you would consent to such an explanation as has become necessary, and so I made no announcement of my coming. You will understand that this step was not an easy one to take."

Christian nodded. "Won't you sit down?" he asked, courteously.

"Not yet, if you don't mind. There are things that cannot be discussed while one is sitting still. They have not been thought out in that posture either." The Privy Councillor opened his fur-coat. His attitude was one of superiority and dignity. His silvery, carefully trimmed beard contrasted picturesquely with the silky blackness of his fur.

There was an oppressive pause. "Is mother well?" Christian asked.

The Privy Councillor's face twitched. The conventional tone of the question made it seem frivolous to him.

Worn out for a moment by this dumb summons to laws of life that had lost their content and their meaning for him, Christian said: "Will you permit me to withdraw for five minutes? I had been sleeping when you rang. I think it was a sleep of many hours, and in my clothes, too, so I must wash. And I want also to beg you to take along a little package for mother. It contains an object that she values. I'm sorry that I haven't the right to explain more fully. Perhaps, if you desire, she will give you the explanation herself, since the whole matter now belongs to the past. So pardon me for a few minutes; I shall be at your service almost immediately."

He went into the adjoining room. The Privy Councillor looked after him with consternation in his large, blue eyes.

While he was alone, he did not stir nor move a muscle of his body.

Christian re-entered. He had bathed his face and combed his hair. He gave the Privy Councillor a little package tied with a cord. On the white paper wrapping he had written: "For my mother. Gratefully returned on the day of final parting. One piece is lacking through the force of unavoidable circumstances; its value has been made up to me a thousandfold. Greeting and farewell. Christian."

The Privy Councillor read the words. "More riddles?" he asked, coldly. "Why riddles on a placard? Have you not time to write a letter? Your ways were more courtly once."

"Mother will understand," Christian replied.

"And have you no other message for her?"

"None."

"May I ask the meaning of these words: 'on the day of final parting'? You referred once before to departure. . . ."

"It would be more practical, perhaps, if you first told me the purpose of your visit."

"You have still your old technique of evasion."

"You are mistaken," said Christian. "I am not trying to evade at all. You come to me like an enemy and you speak like one. I suspect you have come to try to arrange something in the nature of a pact between us. Wouldn't it be simpler if you were frankly to state your proposals? It may be that our intentions coincide. You want all to be rid of me, I suppose. I believe that I can remove myself from your path."

"It is so indeed," the Privy Councillor said, with a rigid and aimless glance. "The situation will brook no further delay. Your brother feels himself trammelled and menaced in his vital interests. You are a source of offence and anger to your sister. Although she has herself left the appointed way, she feels your eccentricity like a deformity of her flesh. Kinsmen of every degree declare the name and honour of the family defiled and demand action. I shall not speak of your mother,

nor should I speak of myself. You cannot be ignorant of the fact that you have struck at me where I was most vulnerable. I have been urged to use force, but I have resisted. Force is painful and futile, and merely recoils against him who uses it. Your plan of simply disappearing—I do not know who mentioned it first—has many advantages. Other continents offer a more grateful soil for ideas so obviously abstruse as your own. It would be easy for you to change the mere scene of your activities, and it would free us from a constant nightmare."

"To disappear—that is precisely my intention," Christian said. "I used that very word to myself. If you had come yesterday, I should probably not have been able to give you as complete satisfaction as I can do to-day. Events have so shaped themselves, however, that we find ourselves at the same point at the same time."

"Since I do not know what events you mean, I cannot, to my regret, follow you," the Privy Councillor said, icily.

Without regarding the interruption, Christian continued, with his vision lost in space. "It is, however, rather difficult to disappear. In our world it is a difficult task. It means to renounce one's very personality, one's home, one's friends, and last of all one's very name. That is the hardest thing of all, but I shall try to do it."

Roused to suspicion by his easy victory, the Privy Councillor asked: "And is that what you meant by your final parting?"

"It was."

"And whither have you determined to go?"

"It is not clear to me yet. It is better for you not to know."

"And you will go without means, in shameful dependence and poverty?"

"Without means and in poverty. Not in dependence."

"Folly!"

"What can hard words avail to-day, father?"

"And is this an irrevocable necessity?"

"Yes, irrevocable."

"And also the parting between ourselves and you?"

"It is you who desire it; it has become a necessity to me."

The Privy Councillor fell silent. Only a gentle swaying of his trunk gave evidence that inwardly he was a broken man. Up to this moment he had nursed a hope; he had not believed in the inevitable. He had followed a faint beam of light, which had now vanished and left him in the darkness. His heart crumbled in a vain love for the son who had faced him with an inevitability which he could not comprehend. And all that he had conquered in this world—power, wealth, honours, a golden station in a realm of splendour—suddenly became to him frightfully meaningless and desolate.

Once more he heard Christian's clear and gentle voice. "You wanted to fetter me through my inheritance; you sought to buy me with it. I came to see that one must escape that snare. One must break even with the love of those who proclaim: 'You are ours, our property, and must continue what we have begun.' I could not be your heir; I could not continue what you had begun, so I was in a snare. All whom I knew lived in delight and all lived in guilt; yet though there was so much guilt, no one was guilty. There was, in fact, a fundamental mistake in the whole structure of life. I said to myself: the guilt that arises from what men do is small and scarcely comparable to the guilt that arises from what they fail to do. For what kinds of men are those, after all, who become guilty through their deeds? Poor, wretched, driven, desperate, half-mad creatures, who lift themselves up and bite the foot that treads them under. Yet they are made responsible and held guilty and punished with endless torments. But those who are guilty through failure in action are spared and are always secure, and have ready and reasonable subterfuges

and excuses; yet they are, so far as I can see, the true criminals. All evil comes from them. That was the snare I had to escape."

The Privy Councillor struggled for an expression of his confused and painful feelings. It was all so different from anything he had expected. A human being spoke to him—a man. Words came to him to which he had to reconcile himself. They held the memory of recent and unhealed wounds that had been dealt him. Arguments refused to come to him. It was false and it was true. It depended on one's attitude—on one's measure of imagination and willingness to see, on one's insight or fear, on one's stubbornness or one's courage to render an accounting to oneself. The ground which had long been swaying under his feet seemed suddenly to show huge cracks and fissures. The pride of his caste still tried in that last moment to raise barricades and search for weapons, but its power was spent.

Without hope of a favourable answer, he asked: "And do not the bonds of blood exist for you any longer?"

"When you stand before me and I see you, I feel that they exist," was the answer. "When you speak and act, I feel them no longer."

"Can there be such a thing as an accounting between father and son?"

"Why not? If sincerity and truth are to prevail, why not? Father and son must begin anew, it seems to me, and as equals. They must cease to depend on what has been, on what has been formulated and is prescribed by use. Every mature consciousness is worthy of respect. The relation must become a more delicate one than any other, since it is more vulnerable; but because nature created it, men believe that it will bear boundless burdens without breaking. It was necessary for me to ease it of some burdens, and you regarded that action as a sin. It is only worldly ideas that have chilled and blinded you to me."

"Am I chilled and blinded?" The Privy Councillor's voice was very low. "Does it seem so to you?"

"Yes, since I renounced your wealth, it has been so. You have constantly been tempted to use all the force you control against me. You face me now with the demands of an affronted authority; and all that, simply because I dared to break with the views of property and acquisition current in the class in which I grew up. On the one hand, you did not venture to violate my freedom, because in addition to social and external considerations, you were conscious of a relation between your heart and mine. I am afraid that prejudice and custom had more to do with sustaining that relation than insight and sympathy; but it exists, and I respect it. On the other hand, you were unable to escape the influences of your surroundings and your worldly station, and so you assumed that I was guilty of ugly and foolish and aimless things. What are these ugly and foolish and aimless things that you think me concerned with? And how do they hinder you and disturb you, even granting their ugliness and folly and futility? Wherein do they disturb Judith or Wolfgang, except in a few empty notions and fancied advantages? And yet if it were more than that—would that little more count? No, it would not count. No annoyance that they might suffer through me would really count. And how have I wounded you, as you say, and affronted your authority? I am your son and you are my father; does that mean serf and lord? I am no longer of your world; your world has made me its adversary. Son and adversary—only that combination will ever change your world. Obedience without conviction—what is it? The root of all evil. You do not truly see me; the father no longer sees the son. The world of the sons must rise up against the world of the fathers, if any change is to be wrought."

He had sat down at the table and rested his head upon his hands. He had suddenly abandoned the uses of society and his own conventional courtesy. His words had risen from sobriety

to passion; his face was pale, and his eyes had a fevered glow. The Privy Councillor, who had believed him incapable of such outbursts and such transformations, gazed down at him rigidly. "These assertions are difficult to refute," he murmured, as he buttoned his fur-coat with trembling fingers. "And what shall a debate avail us at this hour? You spoke of those who fail through not doing. What will you do? It would mean much to me to hear that from you. What will you do, and what have you done hitherto?"

"Until now it was all a mere preparation," Christian said more calmly. "Closely looked upon, it was nothing; it was something only as measured by my powers and ability. I still cling too much to the surface. My character has been against me; I do not succeed in breaking the crust that separates me from the depth. The depth—ah, what is that really? It is impossible to discuss it; every word is forwardness and falsehood. I wish to perform no works, to accomplish nothing good or useful or great. I want to sink, to steep, to hide, to bury myself in the life of man. I care nothing for myself, I would know nothing of myself. But I would know everything about human beings, for they, you see, they are the mystery and the terror, and all that torments and affrights and causes suffering. . . . To go to one, always to a single one, then to the next, and to the third, and know and learn and reveal and take his suffering from him, as one takes out the vitals of a fowl. . . . But it is impossible to talk about it; it is too terrrible. The great thing is to guard against weariness of the heart. The heart must not grow weary—that is the supreme matter. And what I shall do first of all you know," he ended with a winning, boyish smile, "I shall vanish."

"It would be a kind of death," said the Privy Councillor.

"Or another kind of life," Christian replied. "Yes, that is quite the right name for it and also its purpose—to create another kind of life. For this," he arose, and his eyes burned, "this way of life is unendurable. Yours is unendurable."

The Privy Councillor came closer. "And surely, surely you will go on living? That anxiety need not torment me too, need it?"

"Oh," Christian said, vividly and serenely, "I must. What are you thinking of? I must live!"

"You speak of it with a cheerfulness, and I . . . and we . . . Christian!" the Privy Councillor cried in his despair. "I had none but you! Do you not know it? Did you not? I have no one but you. What is to happen now, and what is to be done?"

Christian stretched out his hand toward his father, who took it with the gesture of a broken man. With a mighty effort he controlled himself. "If it be inevitable, let us not drag it out," he said. "God guard you, Christian. In reality I never knew you; I do not now. It is hard to be forced to say: 'I had a firstborn son; he lives and has died to me.' But I shall submit. I see that there is something in you to which one must submit. But perhaps the day will come when that something within you will not utterly suffice; perhaps you will demand something more. Well, I am sixty-two; it would avail me little. God guard you, Christian."

Restrained, erect, he turned to go.

XXXIII

Amadeus Voss said: "He will not enter upon the conflict. He has been placed before the final choice. You think: 'Oh, it is only his family that would make him submit and conform.' But the family is to-day the decisive factor of power in the state. It is the cornerstone and keystone of millennial stratifications and crystallizations. He who defies it is outlawed; he has nowhere to lay his head. He is placed in a perpetual position of criminality, and that wears down the strongest."

"His people seem to have made a considerable impression on you," Lamprecht remarked.

"I discuss a principle and you speak of persons," Voss replied, irritably. "Refute me on my own ground, if you don't mind. As a matter of fact, I saw no one face to face except Wahnschaffe's brother, Wolfgang. He invited me, ostensibly to obtain information, but in fact to test me. A remarkable chap; representative to the last degree. He is penetrated by the unshakable seriousness of those who have counted every rung of the social ladder and measured all social distances to a millimetre. Ready for anything; venal through and through; stopping at nothing; cruel by nature, and consistent through lack of mind. I don't deny the impressiveness of such an extraordinarily pure type. You can't image a better object lesson of all that constitutes the society of the period."

"And, of course, you took Christian's part, and declared that you were unapproachable and unbribable for diplomatic services?" Johanna asked, in a tone of subtle carelessness. "Or didn't you?" She walked up and down in order to lay the board for Christian, whom she yearned for with a deep impatience.

Michael did not take his eyes from the face of Amadeus Voss.

"I never dreamed of such folly," Amadeus answered. "My occupation is research, not moralizing. I have ceased sacrificing myself to phantoms. I no longer believe in ideas or in the victory of ideas. So far as I am concerned, the battle has been decided, and peace has been made. Why should I not admit it frankly? I have made a pact with things as they are. Do not call it cynicism; it is an honest confession of my sincere self. It is the fruit of the insight I have gained into the useful, the effective, into all that helps man actually and tangibly. There was no necessity in the wide world for me to become a martyr. Martyrs confuse the world; they tear open the hell of our agonies, and do so quite in vain. When or where has pain ever been assuaged or healed through pain? Once upon a time I went the way of sighs and the way of the

cross; I know what it means to suffer for dreams and spill one's blood for the unattainable; breast to breast have I wrestled with Satan till at last it became clear to me: you can strip him off only if you give yourself to the world wholly and without chaffering. Nor must you look back, or, like Lot's wife, you will be turned into a pillar of salt. Thus I overcame the devil, or, if you prefer, myself."

"It was, to say the least, a very weighty and significant transformation," said Johanna, cutting the buns in half and buttering them. Her gestures were of an exquisitely calculated ease and charm.

"And what did you finally say to Wolfgang Wahnschaffe?" asked Botho von Thüngen. He sat beside the window, and from time to time looked out into the yard, for in him too there was a deep desire for Christian's presence. In each of them was a dark feeling of his nearness.

"I told him just about what I think," Voss answered. "I said: 'The best thing you can do is to let everything take its natural course. He will be entangled in his own snares. Resistance offers support, persecution creates aureoles. Why should you want to crown him with an aureole? A structure of paradoxes must be permitted to fall of its own weight. All the visions of Saint Anthony have not the converting power of one instant of real knowledge. There must be no wall about him and no bridge for his feet; then he will want to erect walls and build bridges. Have patience,' I said, 'have patience. I who was the midwife of his soul on the road of conversion may take it upon myself to prophesy; and I prophesy that the day is not far off when he will lust after a woman's lips.' For this, I confess, was the thing that mainly gave me pause—this life without Eros. And it was not satiety, no, it was not, but a true and entire renunciation. But let Eros once awaken, and he will find his way back. Nor is the day far off." His face had a look of fanatical certitude.

"It will be another Eros, not him you name," said Thüngen.

Then Michael arose, looked upon Voss with burning eyes, and cried out to him: "Betrayer!"

Amadeus Voss gave a start. "Eh, little worm, what's gotten into you?" he murmured, contemptuously.

"Betrayer!" Michael said.

Voss approached him with a threatening gesture.

"Michael! Amadeus!" Johanna admonished, beseechingly, and laid her hand on Voss's arm.

And while she did so, the door was opened softly, and the little Stübbe girl slipped silently into the room. She was neatly dressed as always. Her two blond braids were wound about her head and made her pain-touched child's face seem even older and more madonna-like. She looked about her, and when she caught sight of Michael, she went up to him and handed him a letter. Thereupon she left the room again.

Michael unfolded the letter and read it, and all the colour left his face. It slipped from his hand. Lamprecht picked it up. "Does it concern us too?" he asked, with a clear presentiment. "Is it from him?"

Michael nodded and Lamprecht read the letter aloud: "Dear Michael:—I take this way of saying farewell to you, and beg you to greet our friends. I must go away from here now, and you will not receive any news of me. Let no one try to seek me out. It seemed simpler and more useful to me to depart in this way than to put off and confuse the unavoidable by explanations and questions. I have taken with me the few things of mine that were in Karen's rooms. They all went into a little travelling bag. What remains you can pack into the box in the other room; there are a few necessities—some linen and a suit of clothes. Perhaps I shall find it possible to have these sent after me, but it is uncertain. For you, Michael, I am sending one thousand marks to Lamprecht, in order that your instruction may be continued for a time; it may also serve in time of need. Johanna will find in the house-agent's care to-morrow, when I shall send it, an envelope

containing two hundred and fifty marks. Perhaps she will be kind enough to use this money to satisfy a few obligations that I leave behind. Once more: Greet our friends. Cling to them. Farewell. Be brave. Think of Ruth. Your Christian Wahnschaffe."

They had all arisen and grouped themselves about Lamprecht. Shaken to the soul, Lamprecht spoke: "I am his, now and in future, in heart and mind."

"What is the meaning of it, and what the reason?" Thüngen asked, in the shy stillness.

"Exactly like Wahnschaffe," Voss's voice was heard. "Flat and wooden as a police regulation."

"Be silent," Johanna breathed at him, in her soul's pain. "Be silent, Judas!"

No other word was said. They all stood about the table, but the place that had been laid for Christian remained empty. Twilight was beginning to fall, and one after another they went away. Amadeus Voss approached Johanna, and said: "That word you spoke to me, following the boy's example, will burn your soul yet, I promise you."

Michael, rapt from the things about him, looked upward with visionary, gleaming eyes.

In weary melancholy Johanna said to herself: "How runs the stage-direction in the old comedies? Exit. Yes, exit. Short and sweet. Exit Johanna. Go your ways." She threw a last look around the dim room, and, lean and shadowy, was the last to slip through the door.

XXXIV

When, two days later, Letitia and Crammon arrived in Stolpische Street, they were told that Christian Wahnschaffe was no longer there. Both flats had been cleared of furniture and were announced as to let. Nor could any one give them any light on whither he had gone or where he was. The

house-agent said he had told his acquaintances that he was leaving the city. To Crammon's discomfort, a little crowd of people gathered around the motor car, and jeering remarks were heard.

"Too late," Letitia said. "I shall never forgive myself."

"Oh, yes, you will, my child, you will," Crammon assured her; and they returned to the realms of pleasure.

Letitia forgave herself that very evening. And what could she have done with so questionable a burden on her conscience? It was but a venial sin. The first tinkle of a glass, the first twang of a violin, the first fragrance of a flower obliterated it.

But at Crammon that neglect and lateness gnawed more and more and not less. In his naïve ignorance he imagined that he could have prevented that extreme step, had he but come two days earlier. Now his loss was sealed and final. He fancied that he might have laid his hand on Christian's shoulder and given him an earnest and admonishing look, and that Christian, put to shame, might have spoken: "Yes, Bernard, you are right. It was all a mistake. Let us send for a bottle of wine, and consider how we may spend the future most amusingly."

Whenever, like a collector who examines his enviously guarded treasures, Crammon turned over his memories of life, it was always the figure of Christian that arose before him in a kind of apotheosis. It was the Christian of the early days, and he only—amid the dogs in the park, in the moonlit nights under the plantain, in the exquisite halls of the dancer, Christian laughing, laughing more beautifully than the muleteer of Cordova, Christian the seductive, the extravagant, the lord of life—Eidolon.

Thus he saw him. Thus he carried his image through time.

And rumours came to him which he did not believe. People appeared who had heard it said that Christian Wahnschaffe had been seen during the great catastrophe in the mines of Hamm. He had gone down into the shafts and helped bring

up the bodies of men. Others came who asserted that he was living in the East End of London, in the companionship of the lowest and most depraved; and again others pretended to know that he had been seen in the Chinese quarter of New York.

Crammon said: "Nonsense, it isn't Christian. It's his double."

He was afraid of the grey years that drew nearer like fogs over the face of the waters.

"What would you say to a little house in some valley of the Carinthian Alps?" he asked Letitia one day. "A quaint and modest little house. You plant your vegetables and grow your roses and read your favourite books, in a word, you are secure and at peace."

"Charming," answered Letitia, "I'd love to visit you now and then."

"Why now and then? Why not make it your abiding place?"

"But would you take in the twins, too, and the servants and auntie?"

"I'm afraid that would require a special wing. Impossible."

"And furthermore . . . I must confess to you that Egon Rochlitz and I have come to an agreement. We're going to be married. That would be one more person."

Crammon was silent for a while. Then he said irritably:

"I give you my curse. You offer me no alternative."

With a smile Letitia offered him her cheek.

He kissed her with paternal reserve, and said: "Your skin is as velvety as the skin of an apricot."

LEGEND

In ancient times there lived a king named Saldschal who had a very ill-favoured daughter. Her skin was rough and hard as that of a tiger, and the hair of her head like the mane of a horse. This vexed the king's spirit sorely, and he caused her to be educated in the innermost chambers of the palace, hidden from the eyes of men. When she had grown up, and her marriage had to be thought of, the king said to his minister: "Seek out and bring to me a poor, wandering nobleman." The minister sought and found such a nobleman. Him the king led to a lonely place, and spoke: "I have a repulsively ill-favoured daughter. Will you take her for your wife, because she is the daughter of a king?" The youth kneeled and made answer: "I shall obey my lord." So those two were made man and wife, and the king gave them a house and closed it with sevenfold doors, and said to his son-in-law: "Whenever you leave the house, lock the doors and carry the key upon your person." And in this the youth was also obedient.

Now one day he and other nobles were bidden to a feast. The other guests came in the company of their wives. But the king's son-in-law came alone, and the people marvelled greatly. "Either," they said one to another, "the wife of this man is so comely and delightful that he hides her from jealousy, or she is so ill-favoured that he fears to show her." To resolve their doubts, they determined to make their way into the house of the man. They caused him to be drunken and robbed him of his keys, and when he lay in a stupor they set out toward his dwelling.

While these things happened, the woman had grievous

thoughts in her lonely captivity. "Of what sin can I be guilty," she asked herself, "that my husband despises me and lets me dwell woefully in this place, where I see neither the sun nor the moon?" And furthermore she thought: "The Victorious and Perfect is present in His world. He is the refuge and redeemer of all who suffer pain and grief. I shall bow down from afar before the Victorious and Perfect. Think of me in thy mercy," she prayed, "and appear visibly before me, and, if so it be possible, in this hour." The Victorious and Perfect, who knew that the thoughts of the king's daughter were pure and filled with the deepest reverence, raised her into His dwelling and showed her His head, which has the hue of lapis lazuli. And when the king's daughter beheld the head of the Victorious and Perfect, she was filled with a very great joy, and her mind was wholly cleansed. And in her purified estate it came to pass that her hair grew soft and became the colour of lapis lazuli. Thereupon the Victorious and Perfect showed her His face entire and unconcealed. At that the joy of the king's daughter grew so great that her own face became comely and delightful, and every trace of ugliness and coarseness vanished. But when at last the Victorious and Perfect showed her the golden radiance of His majestic body, the devout ecstasy felt by the king's daughter caused her own body to be changed to a perfection so divine that nothing comparable to it could be found in all the world. In all His splendour the Victorious and Perfect appeared before her; her joyous faith reached its utmost height, and her innermost being became like to the soul of an angel.

And then came the men who desired to see her, and opened the doors and entered in, and beheld a miracle of beauty. And they said, one to another: "He did not bring the woman with him, because she is so beautiful." They returned to the feast, and made fast the key to the man's girdle. When he awakened from his drunkenness, and went to his house and beheld his wife, and saw that she was incomparable for beauty

among women, he marvelled and asked: "How has it happened that you, who were so ill-favoured, have become comely and delightful?" She answered: "I became thus after I had seen the Victorious and Perfect. Go and relate this thing to my father." The man went and told this matter to the king. But the king replied: "Speak to me not of such things. Hasten to your house, and close it fast so that she may not escape." The son-in-law said: "She is like a goddess." Whereupon the king said: "If it be so in truth, lead her to me." And greatly marvelling, he received the beautiful one in the inner chambers of his palace. Then he betook him to the place where is the seat of the Victorious and Perfect, and bowed down before Him and worshipped Him.

THE END

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